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Discussions on Finnish University Reform in the media

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Abstract

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Finnish university reform was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture between 2008 and 2010; it was a significant change in Finnish society. Change management and change communication are vital these days, both in the private and public sectors. In this thesis change management and change communication are analysed from the public sector point of view. The empirical part deals with media publicity regarding Finnish university reform.

The objective is to find out how this reform was discussed in the media and to what extent the core messages presented in the reform's communication plan were reported there. Change resistance and the process of commitment are also discussed.

Both quantitative and qualitative research methods are used. In addition to a theoretical framework built on relevant literature, a content analysis is done based on news items collected by the Communication Department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. The entire research process was conducted between September of 2011 and April of 2012.

The research results reveal that core messages were for the most part presented well in the media; this supported the communication plan. The overall tone of the items was quite critical, however. During the research process specific themes also arose from the data sample. These themes were also discussed, forming a further basis for analysis.

It was shown that special consideration should be given to change resistance and the commitment process of interest groups. Change resistance towards the reform was considerable, and there seemed to be an overall feeling that the reform process itself was too secretive. This in turn made it difficult for the process of commitment to be integrated into the overall progress of reform.

Key words
societal communication, change management, change communication, public administration, media publicity

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1 Introduction

The Finnish University Reform was prepared and implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture between January 2008 and January 2010. During the reform process a New Universities Act was passed by the Parliament on 16 June 2009 and the Finnish universities changed into independent legal entities, foundations or public corporations. This change in the administration models of Finnish universities enabled them to have autonomy concerning their finances and operational modes.

The reform was also a societal change since it meant that the universities no longer were solely financed by the government. This significant change began discussions on the condition of the Finnish university institution and whether or not the imposed changes were to effect the principles and quality of research and education.

1.1 Objectives of the thesis

The purpose of this thesis is to examine how the Finnish University reform was discussed in the media and whether or not the media coverage supports the communication plan designed for the reform in regard to the core messages presented in it. In other words, how were the core messages of the communication plan adopted by the media? The communication plan was designed by the communications department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. However, the communication plan as a whole is not evaluated. The second objective of this thesis is to examine how the University reform was discussed in general in the media.

In order to achieve these objectives, the following subjects need to be examined: the special charecteristics of societal communication, the role of communication in change management, media publicity and media monitoring, the discussions about the University Reform in the media and the extend of which the core messages are adopted in the media.

The special charecteristics of societal communication, the role of communication in change management as well as the media publicity and media monitoring are discussed on the basis of reference material in the theoretical part of this thesis. The extend of which the core messages are adopted in the media and how the University reform is discussed are determined by examining and analyzing news items collected by the communications department of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Findings and results on the media publicity of the reform for the empirical part are drawn from the analysis of the news items.

1.2 Scope of the thesis

Theories on societal communication, change communication and media publicity were chosen as the treoretical framework and basis for this thesis because the Finnish University reform was a significant change in the Finnish society. It was implemented by the Ministry of Education and Culture, which was als o responsible for the communication of the reform process. The communication of the Ministry of Education and Culture is governed by the principles of societal communication because its communication is targeted at citizens and does not aim at financial profits.

During a time of change communication is also directed by different principles because information needs of the interest groups vary during a change. There is a deeper need for understanding the reasons for change. Even though change communication is a part of change management, change management is not covered in this thesis. The decision was based upon the fact that the reform process itself is not under examination in this thesis. The purpose is to concentrate solely on communication aspects of the reform.

Since the empirical part of this thesis examines news items, theories on media publicity were also chosen for the theoretical frame work. These theories provide a more in-depth understanding on the nature of media publicity and media monitoring. However, the public image of the Ministry of Education and Culture will not me examined as such since the reform was not implemented for the Ministry of Education and Culture.

2 Societal communication

According to Nieminen (Aula and Hakala 2000, 109 – 113) public and the private sector differ essentially by nature from each other and therefore communication in each sector cannot be examined under the same principles. For the organisations in the private sector communication is a strategic tool which helps to achieve the strategic goals. However, in the public sector communicative actions aim at reaching a consensus among the society. The basis of the communication is building a communication situation based on interaction and in which all participants are equal. Contradictory to Nieminen, Högström (2002, 30 – 31) states that the duties of societal communication do not depart from the duties of the corporate communication and thus the communication of the private and the public sector are linked. Högström makes a good argument since many means that have been traditionally linked only to the private sector are nowadays also effectively applied in public sector. A good example is marketing communications.

Societal communication has changed in recent years. Its biggest challenge is to overcome the new requirements of global interaction that is imposed on individual citizens, who try to understand the large global issues and their effects on their daily life. At the same time citizens feel that influencing matters is increasingly difficult, they become passive and their interest in the actions of authorities decreases. An individual citizen has no opportunity to search for information in practise, analyse its impacts or draw conclusions on how to react. Therefore it is the duty of societal communication. (Högström 2002, 9 – 11.)

As the administration culture of the state and municipalities has become more open and tasks of public administration have been delegated to associations and the private sector, the need for societal communication has increased (Högström 2002, 9 – 15). In the following subchapters the special characteristics and the means of societal communication are discussed. Also attention is paid to marketing communications in the public sector.

2.1 The special characteristics of societal communication

All communication is societal when it is directed at people as citizens of a society. In contrast to private sector, communication in public administration aims at promoting the well-being of citizens and the society. In public administration the profitability is not measured by financial returns. The special characteristics of societal communication are ethical trustworthiness, equality and objectivity, the activation ability of the message, influencing attitudes and lifestyle communication. (Högström 2002, 30 – 31, 43 – 51.)

The role of communication in all organisations is to strengthen its goals and to support the achieving of its outlined targets. The course of actions, goals and, by implication, communication is directed by the corporate culture that reflects the predominant values and courses of action. In societal communication, however, the basic values have to be more widely understood than merely the basic values of an organisation. The values have to reflect the basic values and culture of an entire society. The foundation of societal communication is formed by the basic needs and rights of the citizens, which are protected by legislation and international treaties. The premise is also the common value base which contains pivotal notions on the health, security, fundamental livelihood of the citizens and taking care of the living environment. (Högström 2002, 19.)

Traditionally the communication in the public administration has been targeted at the representatives of the mass media. The organisations in the public sector have been dependent on mass media and therefore relations to the most important national or local media has been kept in tact. The effectiveness and success of the communication has been measured by how many times each information bulletin was published and have they been released as the sender has initially planned. Negative publicity has been seen worse than no publicity at all. However, the generalisation of computers and the internet have made direct contact with citizens possible. (Nieminen in Aula and Hakala 2000, 125 – 126.)

According to Högström (2002, 10 – 11), knowledge is no longer power. This is due to the fact that the fast development of communication technology has promoted globalisation and information is at hand to everyone. The communication channels have also shattered. There are several channels and not all target groups are reached with just one channel. Authoritave communication is still under the misconception that all the information communicated by the authorities is considered as important by the citizens. Whereas, the degree of interest of a message depends greatly on how the communication process is executed.

Societal communication has its foundation in authoritative communication. The main duty of a message is to inform the citizens about the existence of a new law, amendment, decision or practice and its effects. The determined duties of societal communication are increasing information, influencing attitudes and changing of operational modes. Out of the three, increasing the amount of information is the most traditional duty of communication and it has been conducted mainly by informing. However, the danger is that communication is only understood as informing. Influencing attitudes and operational modes is more complicated and in these situations communication requires investing both in planning and execution. (Högström 2002, 27 – 30.)

2.2 Means of societal communication

The means of societal communication include informing, committing and profiling. **Informing** is traditionally the most essential part of societal communication. However, it should not be the only means of communication. One-directional generation and transmission of materials can lead to an oversupply of information. This in turn, causes the communication to be ineffective. Informing can also be too shortsighted and randomly directed. Public administration cannot be sure that its message will be transmitted by the media as such since the media is independent and controls its own actions. The most crucial tasks of the media are to pass information to the citizens, to help the citizens to understand what happens around them and thereby oversee the societal decision-making. (Högström 2002, 32 – 33.)

The significance of commitment is emphasized in societal communities and projects. As stated by Högström (2002, 31 – 32), **committing** refers to engaging individuals, interest groups and other members of the community to an organization or a mission. The starting point of communication is motivating individuals and binding them to the mission or the organization. The interest groups of societal projects vary often and therefore naturally the object is to gain as wide perspective to the project as possible. Both material and immaterial factors play a role in commitment: receiving information and influencing possibilities can act as a stimulus for participation but more essential is engaging the interest groups in a project that is societally significant and acceptable.

Profiling refers to all actions through which a certain image is pursued. Profiling or image communication is often seen as elaborate advertisement campaign, the results of which are difficult to measure. However, each person creates an individual image of an organization whether it wants it or not. Organisations need to decide whether they want to impact this image with strategic communication and what kind of communication is needed in order to build the desired image. (Högström 2002, 33 – 34.)

2.3 Marketing communications in public administration

Marketing communications is not widely used in relation to the public administration because it is often associated with commercialism, imposing and ethically dubious traits. In other words, it has not been considered as respected and proper as informing. However, the situation is changing and the need to use marketing communications in order to reach target groups and to get the message across as efficiently as possible is growing. (Högström 2002, 34 – 35.)

Högström (2002, 34 – 35) argues that certain characteristics do not apply in marketing communications in the public administration even though the basic principles are the same. The four Ps defined by Philip Kotler, for example, are not significant in marketing of societal projects. However, Vuokko (2010, 170) states that, all the means of marketing communications are also mostly relevant in marketing communications in the public sector. Vuokko (2010, 172) continues that communication has to be target group -oriented, goal-oriented and situation and operational environment -oriented.

As part of marketing communication, also **a customer-oriented approach** is essential in the communication in the public sector. Traditionally the customer oriented approach has been connected solely to marketing in the private sector as it is often motivated by having a positive effect on the financial returns. Nevertheless, the customer oriented approach has also other effects worth achieving: it influences the operations of an entire organization. The customer oriented approach means that the whole target group is not treated as one big mass. The target groups are divided into smaller groups by various needs and other criteria. The customer oriented approach also demands commitment from the personnel, but it also adds its motivation. The approach should be a common theme for the whole organization and requires a good information flow and cooperation within the organization in question. (Vuokko 2010, 62 – 70.)

3 Change management

Changes have become more and more frequent and there change management has nowadays become crucial both in private and public sectors. Since the topic of this thesis concentrates on communication, the following subchapters discuss change management from the perspective of communication. Also change resistance and the commitment process are examined because they relate to the success of the communication process during a change.

3.1 Communicating change

Change communication is linked to change management. Change management refers to a planned and streamlined progression towards a designed ending. Siukosaari (2002, 119) states that during the 1990s a lot of changes were experienced both in the private sector as well as in the public administration. The communication skills of many organisations were severely challenged. Some organisations were not prepared for changes at all. Previously, the common belief in one-way communication and in the fact that people start acting in a preferred manner if they are given enough information was strong. Heiskanen and Lehikoinen (2010, 109) argue that this is no longer the case. It is even more difficult to pitch change to organisations with just information bulletins and PowerPoint-slides since people no longer rush to change without questioning it.

Hayes (2010, 177) continues that communication plays a vital role in the change process by being a prerequisite for recognising the need for change. Also Cornelissen (2011, 219) emphasises that successful implementation of change usually depends on communication. Weakly managed communication can lead to rumours and resistance to change. Communication and change are linked to each other because communication is essential to how a change is formulated, announced and explained to employees and interest groups.

According to Heiskanen and Lehikoinen (2010, 19) change communication is often referred to as an own brand of communication even though it is part of strategic communication. Juholin (2009, 320) continues the definition by stating that whereas crisis communication is expedited basic communication, change communication is based on the depth of the handled issues and thoroughness. Poorly communicated change can lead to a crisis situation and require crisis communication.

Change communication has several duties: description of the nature of the change, creating an understanding, explaining the reasons behind the change and its goals, handling of the gained results and future challenges as well as creating prerequisites for a change. In a time of change the need for information and the need for a discussion on its reasons, goals and achievements grow significantly. The issues the interest groups are thinking about, the issues they wonder and the issues they do not believe are considered to be of high importance. Change management and its planning should be dealt with like any other daily communication planning which aims at helping to understand the goals of business actions. Nowadays communication is always mainly communication of an on-going change or reform. Changes in organisations require intensification and deepening of basic communication, interaction and participation. (Heiskanen and Lehikoinen 2010, 19; Juholin 2009, 320.)

Siukosaari (2002, 120) clarifies further what is expected from communication during a change:

- Enough accurate information on time
- Information also on the fact that currently there are no new information
- Empathy and meeting of expectations
- Feedback and interaction
- Ten times more informing compared to normal existence

Siukosaari makes a valid point since the need for information does not cease to exist even though the change process is not progressing.

According to Hayes (2010, 174 – 175), change management is often experienced as a top-down process and communication is build on the same pattern. Therefore many organisations encounter difficulties in reducing employee uncertainty during a change. Effective change communication calls for a stream of upward communication which provides change managers with the information they require in order to clarify the need for change and develop and implement a change programme. Managers transmitting messages downwards have a tendency to screen out any information they perceive to be not directly relevant to the task of the subordinates. This attitude can lead to problems when change managers fail to pass information that might have helped others to understand the need for change or feel more involved in the change process.

Communication enables change managers to create a shared sense of direction, establish priorities, reduce disorder and uncertainty and facilitate learning. According to Linda Holbeche (2006, 315 – 316) one of the important functions of communication in times of change is also to enhance and build trust. In addition, communication can be used in building commitment and gaining employees buy-in to change. Communication is essential in reducing uncertainty, encouraging involvement through feedback and two-way communication and managing expectations. However, change managers do not always recognise the importance of the role of communication.

Change communication is often challenged because is change is continuous. Therefore organisations should be prepared to exist in a state of constant change. Even though a change can be a big opportunity, it is frequently seen as a threat. Some are against it, some are for it and some do not know what to think about it. The most crucial objectives of communication during change are the following:

- The personnel understands what the change is about and why it is necessary
- The personnel has all the time information on how well the goals have been achieved
- The work community has enough interactive forums where the daily questions about the change can be constructively addressed
- An organisation is able to utilise the expertise of its personnel as well as possible through a discussion connection.

Juholin (2009, 322 – 323) applies the above mentioned objectives mostly to the personnel of an organisation, but same could be applied also to other interest groups of an organisation.

3.2 Communication strategies

The management scholar Philip Clampitt et al. divide the communication strategies in five basic strategies shown in the following figure 1. These categories are spray and pray, tell and sell, underscore and explore, identify and reply and withhold and uphold. Managers may use other strategies or a combination of the five strategies. The strategies towards the middle of the figure offer employees and interest groups more guidance by prioritising communication and by providing relevant information on the change process. (Cornelissen 2011, 220.)

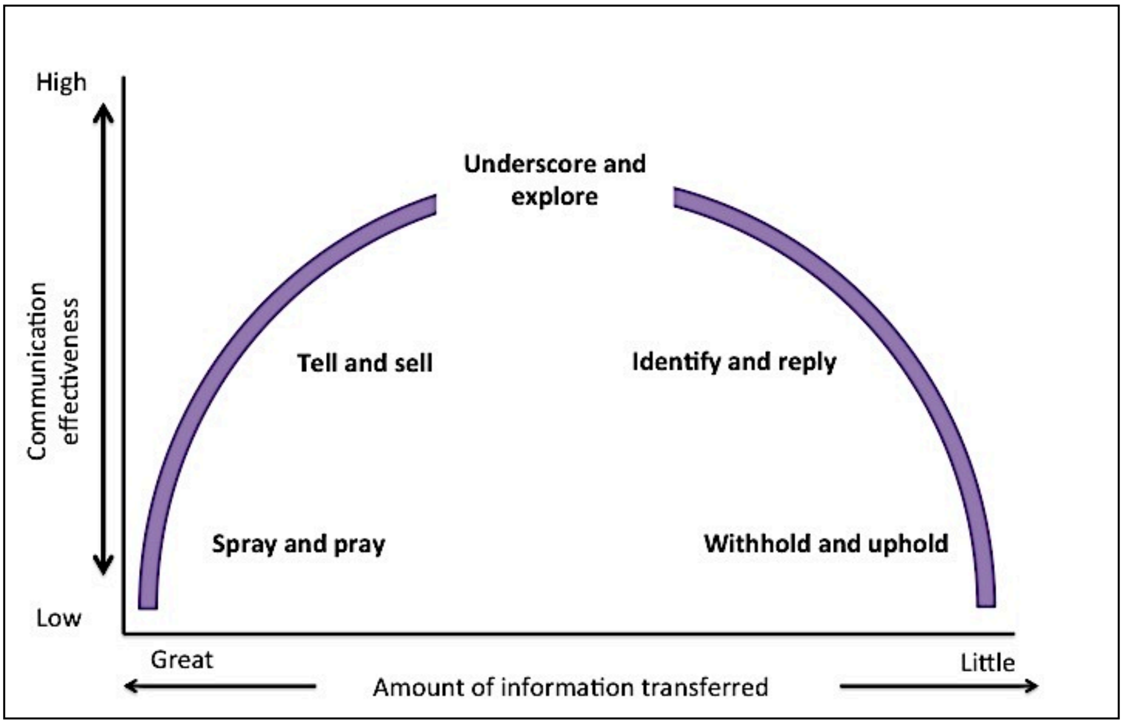

Figure 1. Effectiveness of communication strategies (Hayes 2010, 179)

In a **spray and pray** strategy employees are shattered with all kinds of information in the hope that they will feel informed and have access to all the information they require. This strategy is based on the assumption that more information equals better communication, which in turn contributes to improved decision-making. It also relies on the assumption that all members of an organisation are able to differentiate between what is significant and what is insignificant. However, in practise this might not be the case –some members might become overwhelmed by the amount of information they receive and cannot tell what information is actually relevant to them. (Hayes 2010, 178.)

When implementing **a tell and sell** strategy change managers communicate a more limited set of messages that they believe address the core issues related to a proposed change. First they inform others about the key issues and then sell the wisdom behind their approach to the others. In this approach a great deal of time is often spend planning sophisticated presentations but little time and energy is devoted to fostering meaningful dialogue and providing organisational members with opportunities to discuss their concerns. (Hayes 2010, 178.)

An underscore and explore strategy also involves focusing attention on a limited set of fundamental issues linked to the change. However, unlike in the tell and sell strategy change managers give others the creative freedom they need to explore the implications of these issues. Adopting this approach concerns with developing a few core messages and listening attentively for potential misunderstandings and unrecognised obstacles. (Hayes 2010, 178.)

An **identify and reply** strategy differs from the first three because it primarily focuses on the concerns of organisational members. It is a reactive approach that involves a lot of listening in order to identify and then respond to these concerns. The strategy is essentially directed towards helping employees make sense out of the often confusing organisational environment. This approach relies also on the assumption that organisational members know what the critical issues are even though this might not always be the case. When using a **withhold and uphold** strategy information is withhold until necessary. Adopting this strategy is usually based on the notion that information equals power or on the assumption that most organisational members are not sophisticated enough to grasp the big picture. (Hayes 2010, 178.)

3.3 Change resistance

A change is always a conflict situation in which people rather reject unpleasant information than adjust their attitudes and behaviour. Therefore the communication has to be streamlined in a change situation. A simple and understandable bulletin is never enough even though it originates from a trustworthy source. Change communication requires more reasoning. (Siukosaari 2002, 120.)

As stated by Erämetsä (2003, 98), change resistance can be natural and at the same time a negative and difficult matter. Hays (2010, 193 – 196) continues that people resist change when they think that it will cause them to loose something of value. Interest groups often concentrate on their own best interests rather than those of the organisation. Holbeche (2006, 76 – 78) seems to agree with Erämetsä and Hayes and explains further that resistance is a natural response to an imposed and significant change. When more important changes are conducted at the same time, the chance of resistance is higher.

Misunderstandings can be a common source of resistance. Stakeholders and, by implication, other interest groups resist change because they do not understand the consequences it may have for them. Therefore they might think that the change will bring them more disadvantages than benefits. Misunderstandings can be caused also by uncertainty and they are more likely to occur when there is a lack of trust between the various parties of the change in question. Change agents often fail to anticipate the resistance especially when they consider that the change will benefit all parties. (Hayes 2010, 193 – 195; Holbeche 2006, 79.)

A second reason for resisting change is that interest groups might assess the situation differently from those initiating the change. According to Hays (2010, 195), it is not uncommon for resistance to occur even in situations where the management and organisational members share a common view of a problem. Both parties might have conflicting opinions on how the problem should be resolved. Nevertheless, sometimes different assessments are seen as resistance when they should be looked at as valuable feedback. Ignoring this valuable feedback might cost managers goodwill and harm important relationships.

The third and final reason for resisting change is a low tolerance for change. Even though all people have a limited ability to change, some are more limited than others.

Interest groups and personnel understand the need for change intellectually but sometimes they are emotionally unable to make the transition. (Hayes 2010, 195.)

Identifying the source of resistance makes it possible to see what could be done to minimize resistance. Thus, the resistance can be converted into positive commitment to change. Resistance to change is often tackled with motivating people for change. However, identifying what motivates people can be difficult since different people are motivated by different things. One of the key practises in motivating is to educate people about the need for a change: when people understand the reasons behind the change they are less likely to resist it. Sometimes when the level of commitment to a change is low, rational educative strategies may still prove less effective than persuasive approaches. Persuasive approaches can increase the level of commitment by stressing either the benefits of changing or the costs of staying the same. A persuasive argument that focuses on what will be lost by not changing often proves to be more effective. (Hayes 2010, 202; Holbeche 2006, 78, 383.)

Another alternative for motivating people to a change is to involve them in the change process which can excite, motivate and help to create a shared perception of the need for change within a target group. If instead of the participation, a change is imposed, the target groups are likely to experience a lack of control and feel like victims instead of participants or even contributors. Participation and involvement can also generate better decisions and help to sustain the change because of a greater sense of ownership. Involvement can be encouraged at any stage of the process. Target groups can be motivated also by facilitation and support which includes the provision of training, listening and providing emotional support. This approach is most effective when fear and anxiety lie at the heart of resistance. (Hayes 2010, 203; Kotter & Schlesinger 2008.)

Other approaches used for motivating people include negotiation and agreement, manipulation and co-option and explicit and implicit coercion. A negotiation and agreement approach is used in a situation where a person with significant power to resist the change is likely to lose out as a result of the change. Offering incentives and to active or potential resisters can be a relatively easy way to avoid major resistance but it can also prove to be expensive. Manipulation and co-option are most frequently used when the endorsement of a person for the change is needed, not his or hers actual participation. The endorsement is gained by giving a person a desirable role in the change process or its outcome. Manipulation and co-option can be rather inexpensive and easy but at same time they may have severe drawbacks. When people feel that were tricked into not resisting or they were lied to, they are likely to respond very negatively. Resistance is often also dealt with coercion. This means that people are forced to accept a change by explicitly or implicitly threatening them. Coercion is a risky process because people resent a forced change but it might be the only option if speed is essential or the changes will not be popular regardless of how they are executed. (Hays 2010, 204; Kotter & Schlesinger 2008.)

However, Heiskanen and Lehikoinen (2010, 56) warn that change resistance is often used as an excuse when a change is not proceeding fast enough or it fails. This is unfortunate since the change resistance can be used as a vital tool for implementing change.

3.4 Commitment

Commitment signifies a strong belief that an individual has in the goals and values of an organisation and their acceptance. A committed individual also wants to strive considerably on an organisation's behalf and be a member of the organisation. Commitment is based upon emotions. (Lampikoski 2005, 10, 46.)

The following figure 2 demonstrates the eight degrees of commitment during a change which were originally created by the German-American psychologist Kurt Lewin and then developed further by Reijo Korhonen and Unto Pirnes at the School of Management (JTO). The eight stages include sabotage, resistance, surrender, neutrality, acceptance, acting, co-operation and commitment.

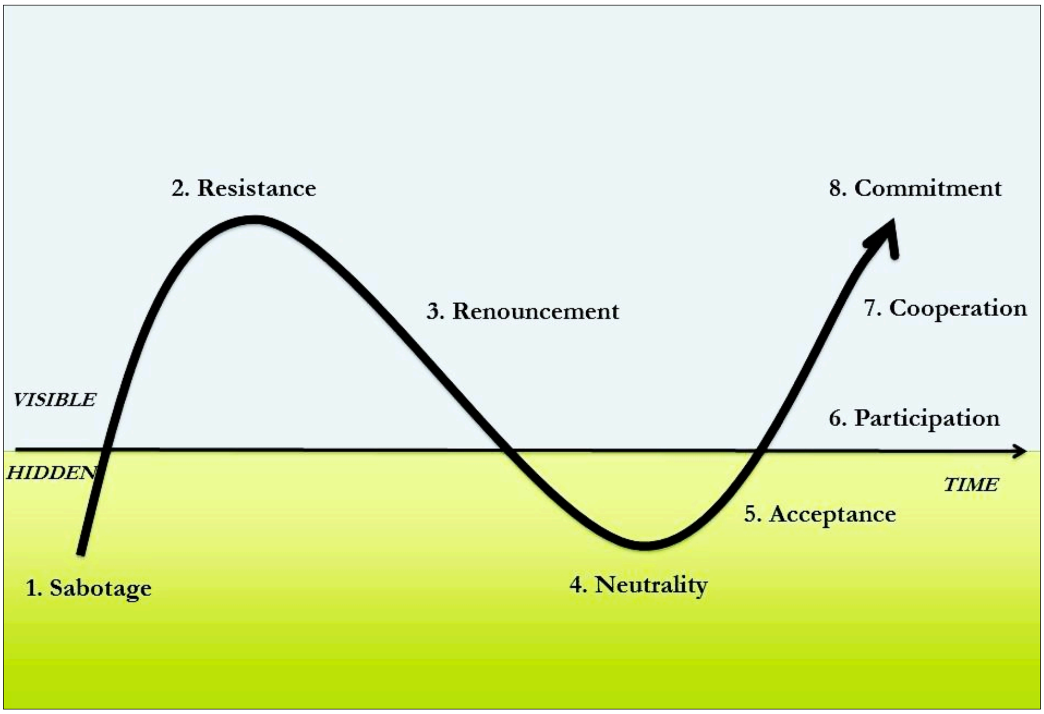

Figure 2. Commitment during a change (Arikoski & Sallinen 2008, 71)

The first stage shown in the figure 2 is **sabotage**. Sabotage is the first sub stage of change resistance. During this stage people take a stance on the change and they try to prevent the execution of the change. The initiator of the change should be able to recognize saboteurs operating beneath the surface and prevent the sabotage with suitable openness. By making the sabotage visible the commitment level will rise to the next level which is called **resistance**. During the stage of resistance the experience of intelligibility is necessary to all people involved with a change. In this stage people show their resistance openly and therefore they are easily detected. It is important that the realiser of the change uses the criticism in the completion of the change since the resistance cannot be stifled by argumentation instigating more hatred or by aggressive counterclaims. By collecting the constructive critism the energy of the people can be used to the benefit of the change. Strong and genuine listening is needed during this stage instead of imposing own thoughts,values and change jargon. (Arikoski & Sallinen 2008, 72 – 74.)

The next stage in the commitment process is called **renouncement**. This is the first sub stage of the mourning phase. During this stage people tend to feel unprotected and they need to come into terms with the fact that change is progressing whether they want it or not. Support by the management is needed at this stage. The next stage of the mourning phase is **neutrality** in which people do not care whether the change happens or not. The energy level is low for both resistance and participation. People start to feel empowered through the support from management. (Arikoski & Sallinen 2008, 74 – 75.)

Neutrality is followed by the **acceptance**. During this phase people start to trust little by little that the change is the right and only alternative. However, they do not yet participate in the change. The acceptance occurs usually in hiding and therefore it is important to recognise and separate these people from those who sabotage or resist the change. Listening is also emphasised at this stage. The next stage is **participation** in which people gradually start participating in the change by for example talking to others about it positively or learning new things systematically. This stage is already visible. Participation is succeeded by **cooperation**. With cooperation the change is turned into a collectively significant and the energy is directed at the right things at the right moment and the implementing of goals is thus easier. (Arikoski & Sallinen 2008, 75 – 77.)

The final stage of the commitment process is the actual **commitment**. During this stage the own actions of an individual is combined with the changes. Management serves as an example for the others by implementing the changes in their work. If however, the management fails to do so, the others are not motivated to dedicate themselves to the change. During the final stage it is important that the management sees to that the others have their own part in the change because people ultimately commit themselves to change best when they are allowed to participate in it. (Arikoski & Sallinen 2008, 78 – 79.)

4 Media publicity

Media is an important tool for organisations. Media enables them to transfer messages to the public and interest groups as well as forms an image of the organisations for the interest groups. Organisations are able to follow the effectiveness of their communication with media monitoring. In the following subchapters discuss the nature of media publicity and media monitoring.

4.1 The nature of media publicity

Media has become a common nomination for mass media that includes newspapers and magazines either in printed or online form as well as radio and TV. In corporate communication the media can be seen as a transmitter through which the actual receivers of the messages are reached. However, the media has a double role. At the same time as organisations try to reach their interest groups and target audiences through the media, the media itself is also one of the interest groups of an organisation. (Juholin 2009, 227.)

According to Vuokko (2010, 174) the term media publicity refers to a conscious endeavour to gain free time and exposure in the media on positive items related to an organisation. Behind all of it is the own activity of an organisation towards the media. The most attractive quality of publicity is its credibility: the defense wall of the target groups are less high than for example when it comes to advertising. Despite its positive qualities, media publicity has also its downsides. Firstly, an organisation cannot continuously be a source of positive news and secondly, an organisation cannot control the media publicity surrounding it and its operations. The media acts as a gatekeeper and strives to act according to the needs and interests of its audience.

In order to receive positive publicity, an organisation has to be worth of the good news. Everyone can cope with positive publicity but what happens when the positive turns into negative. Also negative publicity has to be handled properly. In these situations publicity can be either reactive or proactive. In reactive approach an organisation responds to the negative publicity and suspicions of the media concerning it and its operations and defends itself against them. In other words an organisation reacts to the actions of the media. In proactive approach an organisation brings forward also the tedious issues independently. The proactive approach is related to the crisis management. In a crisis situation silence is easily interpreted as an acknowledgement or evasion of the issue at hand. (Vuokko 2010, 175 – 176.)

4.2 Media monitoring

In order to be successful in publicity an organisation must have the ability to follow and analyse conversations about them in the media. According to Kuutti (2008, 107), what often makes media monitoring interesting are the extend of publicity, the subject of conversation and the handling methods. It is also important to be aware of what kind of images form of an organisation and its operations in the public. As stated by Juholin (2010, 77) the reason or motivation for media monitoring can rise from the following factors:

- A need to follow processes and campaigns has come forth in the research results
- An organisation is a target of interest of various parties based on its significance or degree of interest and therefore the organisation must stay in the public eye
- An organisation in a temporary situation in which its issues are handled on one or more forums
- An organisation is renewing its operations or its strategy and it needs various information for its decision-making

Media monitoring is an essential tool also in assessing effectiveness and impressiveness of communication. It can be directed at an organisation itself, its networking partners, one or more of the interest groups of an organisation, traditional media or social media. Media monitoring can be continuous or it can relate to one or several interest groups. Furthermore, media monitoring can refer to a particular situation, project or campaign. (Juholin 2010, 77.)

Media monitoring can be directed at important dialogue themes of an organisation in general, issues concerning an organisation itself in various media or views of particular interest groups as well as the functionality of the dialogues. The monitoring process resembles a research process and a sample can be quantitative, qualitative or a combination of the two. The research data is determinated based on the needs of each case. (Juholin 2010, 77 – 78, 111.)

As stated by Kuutti (2008, 107), also the following questions are considered when analysing an organisation's own publicity: the subject of the discussion, how the discussion is created, what terms are used and what is the context. In addition, actors on which media publicity is build are examined. These actors have for their own part an impact on the content of the media publicity whether they volunteered for the position or not. Particularly important from the perspective of the own communication of an organisation are the observations of issues which despite of the publicity efforts have not reached the media publicity. Viewpoints which are offered to the media but on the basis of which an organisation is not discussed, should be taken into account as well.

4.2.1 Media snapshot

According to Kuutti (2008, 109), a media snapshot reveals an intrinsic picture or an image of an organisation transmitted by the media. It is a kind of overall picture of the organisation's encounters with the media. At the same time, it indicates how the organisation is managing its publicity. Organisations are able to assess their own media publicity and its changes with their media snapshot. Juholin (2010, 111) states further that a media snapshot is often interlaced with media monitoring. It is a summary of where an organisation is before making decisions.

A media snapshot reflects how well an organisation has succeeded with its own communication in building their publicity and especially in cooperating with the media. Factors which relate to this are the amount of publicity in various media, comprehensive thematic entities, interaction between the structural factors of publicity, source background of an item and the tones of publicity and their changes. Media snapshot indicates the media publicity of an organisation at a specific time. Therefore it can vary at a very short time frame. (Kuutti 2008, 109.)

The importance of a media snapshot is emphasised by its comprehensiveness. Even though media publicity consists of published items, the public still cannot perceive the public image of an organisation based on such individual items. Individual mass media cannot form a comprehensive impression based on the media publicity either because it is formed by items published by various media. A media snapshot offers an organisation tools to the assessment of the effects of their media publicity. At the same time an organisation has the opportunity to consider its own communicational reacting case by case. (Kuutti 2008, 110.)

A media snapshot can be produced daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly or even yearly as part of the annual report. As stated by Kuutti (2008, 111), own separate media snapshots can be contrived from long-lasting themes and broader thematic entities. With this type of **media compilations** uncommon events or situations of an organisation can be examined. The compilations open new examination perspectives for handling of an organisation by the media. In addition to the number of items, their tone and size of audience, also thematic entities build by the media and animation of the discussion raised by the themes in various media are common subjects of interest.

Media reputation of an organisation is built on both the materialised media publicity and the notions or estimates concerning an organisation made by the media or a single journalist. The knowledge of the level of one's own media cooperation and media relations gives an organisation the opportunity to assess and predict the possible future tones of its publicity in the media. Media reputation has its own significance also to the premises of a story. If the preconceptions of the media about an organisation are already fundamentally positive, they are most likely reflected in the media publicity so that negative situations are handled less frequently or negative situations are handled more positively. In addition, an organisation may receive an emphasised position for its own issues in the media. Well-knit media relations lead generally to a situation where the media does not cover an organisation in public without giving it the chance to bring forth its own perspectives about the issue in question. (Kuutti 2008, 112.)

As stated by Kuutti (2008, 112), when it comes to media monitoring positive publicity is not necessarily the most interesting knowledge for an organisation. Neutral publicity can easily turn into negative publicity and therefore it should be examined. On the other hand negative publicity can also communicate about wider suspicions against the operations of an organisation and demand immediate reconstructive actions. This is the case especially if the negative publicity grows wider and thicker as it often will.

4.2.2 Media monitoring in practise

The following figure 3 indicates that media analysis can consist of three dimensions: a structural factor analysis, a qualitative analysis and a determination of the original background.

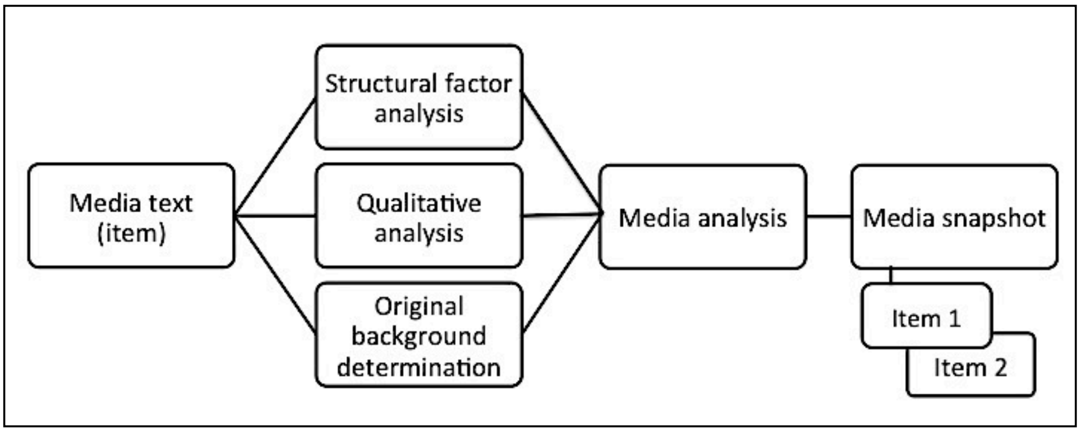

Figure 3. Building a media snapshot (Kuutti 2008, 110)

An organisation is able to specify to what extend the various factors in the media such as the character of an item and the tone of the subject at hand are presented in the media with a **structural factor analysis**. By cross-referencing two chosen factors to each other, connections between the two can be build and possible cause-consequence-relations can be assessed. The manner of addressing an item, the choice of words, possible value charges and the tone of an item are examined in **qualitative analysis**. An important element of qualitative analysis is also the themes of an item or the lack of them (Kuutti 2008, 112 – 113).

Determination the original background of an item usually requires a separate research. The media operations of an organisation and it's the cooperation and interaction with the media are under evaluation. Background analysis helps to assess the possible hidden agenda of the media regarding an organisation or a specific subject, the effectiveness of the communication of an organisation and the interaction between the two when the media is acquiring data. Background analysis is especially important because it enables an organisation to understand better its own operational models and to some extend also the general and single operation models of the media. (Kuutti 2008, 112 – 113.)

5 Case: The Finnish University reform

The Finnish University reform was prepared by the Ministry of Education and Culture. The Parliament passed the Universities bill on 16 June 2009. The new Universities Act replaced the Universities Act of 1997 and extends the autonomy of universities and the management and decision-making system of the universities was reformed.

5.1 University reform in a nutshell

The preparation for the reform of the Universities Act started in spring 2007 and it was done in close collaboration with universities and stakeholders. In June 2009 Parliament passed the Universities Bill, which replaced the Universities act of 1997.
The new University Act expanded the autonomy of universities further by giving them an independent legal personality, either as public corporations or as foundations. At the same time, the universities' management and decision-making power was reformed. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

The following figure 4 explains the timetable and stages of the reform in detail. The preparations for the new Universities Act started in the spring 2007 and in the spring 2009 the bill was brought in front of the Finnish Parliament. On 16 June 2009 the Parliament passed the bill and the Act on the implementation of the new Universities act took effect on 1 August 2009. The autumn 2009 was reserved for bringing the organisation in line with the new Act and on 1 January 2010 activities in accordance with the new Act started. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

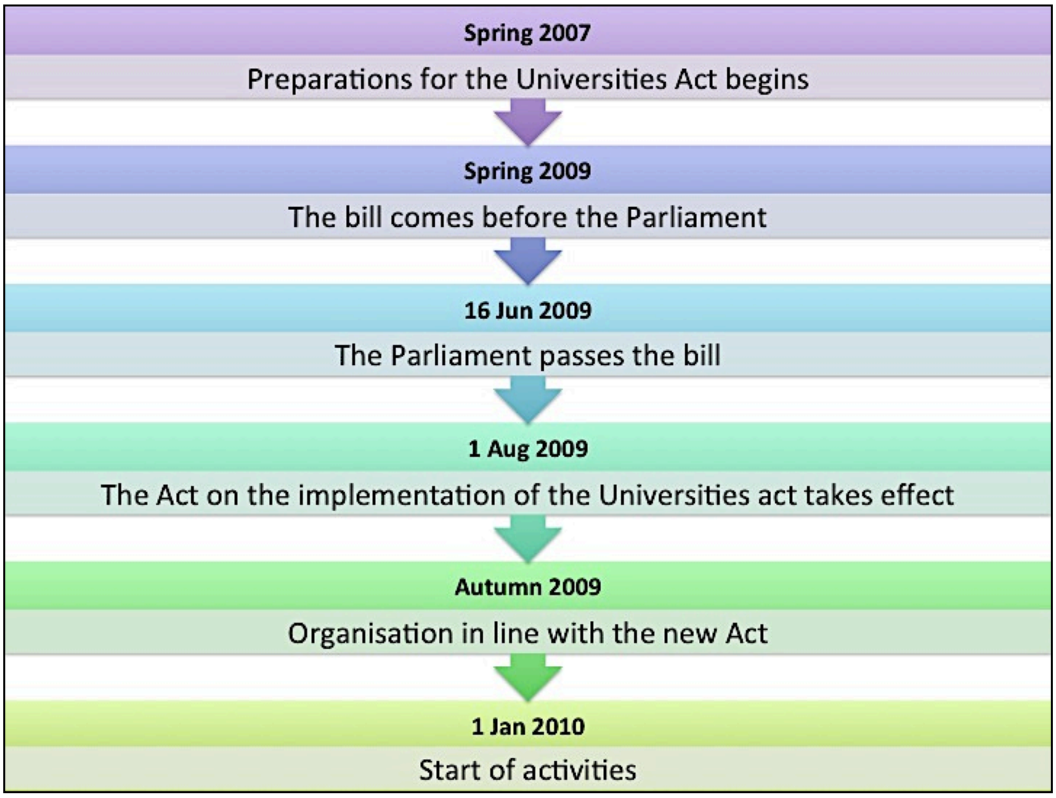

Figure 4. Timetable and stages of the University Reform (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

The key objective of the University Reform was to facilitate operation in an international environment. The reform enables universities to react to changes in the operational environment, diversify their funding base, compete for international research funding, cooperate with foreign universities and research institutes, allocate resources to top-level research and their strategic focus areas, ensure the quality and effectiveness of their research and teaching and strengthen their role within the system of innovation. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

To achieve the objective the universities were transformed into independent legal personalities that are separated from the State and have the choice of becoming either corporations subject to public law or foundations subject to private law. The universities have now more power because the steering of universities by state administration is reduced. The universities are no longer developed as part of the state administration but according to their main mission, which includes education and research. University staff is no longer employed by the State. Previously the university personnel has had civil-service employment relationships with the State. These relationships became contractual employment relationships during the reform and now universities negotiate in collective bargaining. This way the universities are able to pursue independent human resources policies, improve their attractiveness as an employer and therefore strengthen their competitive advantage in order to recruit the best personnel. During the transition the interests of the personnel were safeguarded. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

After the reform the universities have more latitude in managing their finances. The universities are more capable of utilizing their income from capital and supplementing their financing with donations and business activities meaning that they are able to use the revenue from their business ventures, donations and bequeaths and the return in their capital for financing their operations. This facilitates targeting of research and education resources and allows the universities to develop stronger profiles on the basis of their strengths. Consequently, their capacity for operating in the international environment improves. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

Government continues to guarantee sufficient core funding to the universities, which is tied to the rise in costs for the universities. Furthermore, the universities are able to apply for competed public funding. The capitalization of the universities safeguards theirs financial standing, solvency and creditworthiness. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

One of the aims of the reform was to consolidate the influence, societal relations and financial skills of the boards of universities, which are subject to public law. The full financial liability that the universities obtained during the reform emphasizes the importance of strategic management. University administration and management were also reformed and strengthened so that universities are able to respond more flexibly and independently to the challenges arising from their new financial status. Academic decision-making and the position of the university rectors was also consolidated and members of the university community e.g. professors, other personnel and students continue to be represented in the board. (Ministry of Education and Culture 2011a.)

5.2 Communication plan of the reform

The communication department of the Ministry of Education and Culture prepared a communication plan for the University reform process. At the preparation and planning stages the responsibility of communication lied with the working committee of the reform. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 1.)

According to the plan extra resources such as working hours were allocated for the different stages of the communication of the reform and time was reserved for the planning and execution of the communication. The communication department also prepared for purchasing the services of communication consultants and producing materials. The plan also states that planning of the communication process and its execution in cooperation with the universities will enhance openness during the process. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 1.)

The communication plan of the reform is divided into six parts: core messages of the reform, target groups, aims of the communication, means and channels of communication, materials and events of communication and the efficiency of communication. The communication plan states that there should be enough information available on webpages of the Ministry of Education and Culture. Materials in English and a brochure should also be prepared. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 1 – 3.)

5.2.1 Core messages

The communication plan (Opetusministeriö 2008, 1) states that the core messages of the communication are part of the commitment process. It also notes that the opportunities and critical success factors of the reform should be discovered. Common core messages enable parallel performance. The plan also mentions that the core messages of the University reform should answer questions about the autonomy, finance, position in the society, internationality, position of personnel, foundation model etc. The core messages are as follows:

1) Increases the autonomy of universities and turns them into independent legal persons. Therefore the power and responsibility will increase.

2) Research and education will remain as main tasks of the universities also in the future.
3) Negotiation rights of employees will be transferred to universities. Therefore the universities are able to practise more independent personnel policies compared to the situation now. The interests of the personnel are safeguarded during the transition phase.
4) The status of students and student unions will remain as it is.
5) Degree education will remain free-of-charge. Universities will receive the opportunity to collect fees for the Master's programmes taught in foreign languages from students coming from outside the EU/ETA area.
6) Universities have better possibilities to practise economic activities. The State will guarantee adequate basic funding for all universities, which will be raised at least according to the development of costs.
7) Universities are able to react more flexibly and efficiently to the changes in their operating environment.
8) It will possible for the universities to build up their own wealth
9) A nationwide joint application system will be established. The responsibility of student elections will remain with universities.

5.2.2 Target groups

The communication plan states that during the reform process the importance of various target groups will change. Keeping the media informed and committing of the personnel of universities to the process will be a firm part at all stages. The information needs of the target groups vary. Universities act as partners of the Ministry of Education and Culture during the reform. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 1 – 2.)

5.2.3 Aims of the communication plan

The communication plan emphases that trust in the reform will supported by communicational means. These means are delivering information, and making the goals of the reform and the progression of the reform known for the public. Also the basics of the reform are informed to the public. The target groups are kept informed throughout the various stages. Another important aim of the plan is to maintain discussion and to ensure that the facts of the reform are visible. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 2.)

5.2.4 The means and channels of communication

According to the communication plan the means and channels of communication are chosen on the basis of the target groups. The commitment of the personnel of the universities is crucial. The best requirements for commitment and positive attitude are participation and opportunities to influence. Also interactive meetings, workshops and discussion gatherings enforce commitment. In addition to these the plan emphases that there needs to be enough information and facts available. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 2 – 3.)

The plan divides the means and channels of communication roughly into three categories based on the target groups. The first category is the means and channels for the media and this category includes information bulletins, press conferences background conferences for the journalists, editors' meetings with the minister of education, regular morning coffee meetings and meeting of journalists also in the provinces. The own website of the reform both in Finnish, in Swedish and in English; the Yliopistoilta on the Ajankohtainen kakkonen news programme on TV and guest pen articles in the number one newspapers in the provinces and in Suomen Kuvalehti magazine are also mentioned as means in the media category. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 2 – 3.)

The second category is the means and channels of communication for the stakeholders. The means and channels in this category are a ”Chat with the minister” discussion forum on the otakantaa.fi webpages; brochures in Finnish, in English and in Swedish; articles in the stakeholder' newspapers; articles in the publications of the administrative field; seminars and meeting and presentation materials for them; road shows and discussions with citizens in the counties, Etusivu online newspaper published by the Ministry of Education and Culture and other publications. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 2 – 3.)

The third and final category contains the support of the internal communication of the universities. The means and channels in this group are a seminar for the publicists of universities held in August of 2008 and discussion forums kept in cooperation with universities. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 2 – 3.)

5.2.5 The effectiveness of the communication

According to the communication plan the effects of the communication will be evaluated. The execution of the communication plan and preparing the information bulletins, events and material according to the schedule are quantitative results. However, more important is the evaluation of the significance of the communication to the success of the reform. The results of the communication can be evaluated by media follow-up and cooperation evaluation. (Opetusministeriö 2008, 3.)

6 Research method and process description

Traditionally quantitative and qualitative research has been seen as opposites. In this thesis however, the research is conducted by using both the quantitative and qualitative methods as they are considered to complement each other. The following subchapters present the research methods used in this thesis and the cornerstones of the research process.

6.1 Research methods

For the purpose of this thesis several research methods were used because of the complex nature of the research question. In order to find out how the data supported the core messages and, thus, the communication plan and what was discussed in public about the University reform both quantitative and qualitative methods were needed.

Quantitative research methods are used to create statistical analysis from the chosen data. To what extend the core messages were adopted as such and presented by the media can be examined through quantitative methods, which indicate for example how many times each core message was referred to. However contrary to qualitative research methods, the quantitative methods do not provide an insight into what actually was discussed and how, or general themes of the discussion. Therefore it became evident that a combination of the two research methods were needed in order to answer the research questions presented in the introduction of this thesis. (Ghauri & Grønhaug 2002, 86.)

6.2 Process description

The stages of the research process for this thesis are indicated in the following figure 5. In addition to the stages, also the outcome of each stage is indicated in the green boxes in the figure 5. The stages include data collection, reading through the news items, classifications of the data into a spread sheet, collecting findings and writing out the results. All of the stages are explained in detail in the subsequent chapters.

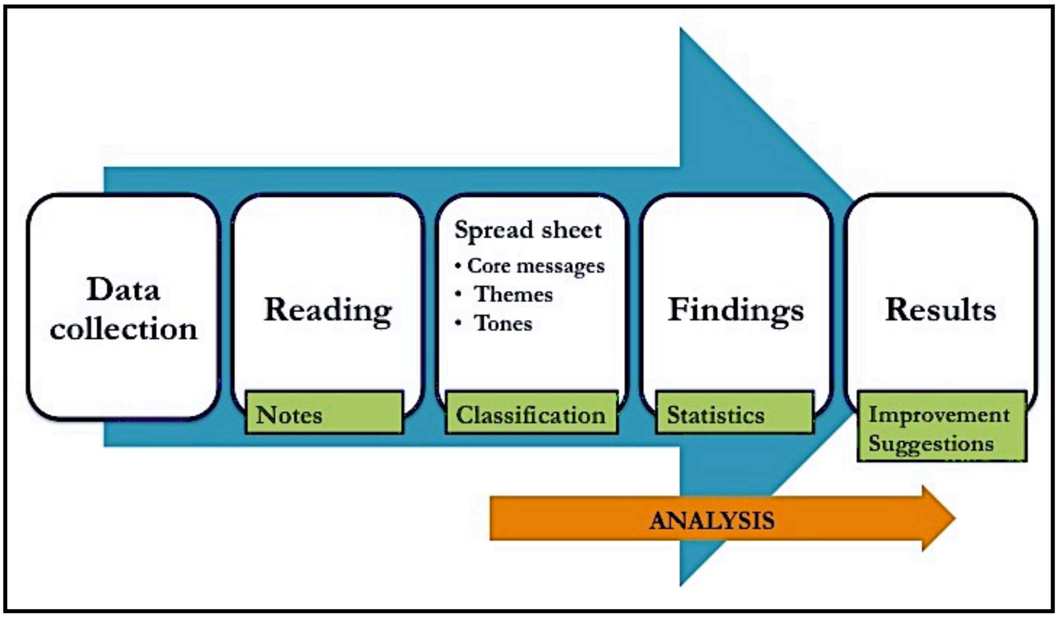

Figure 5. Implementation of the research process

6.2.1 Data collection

The communication department of the Ministry of Education and Culture collected news items about the reform process from 1 January 2008 to 31 January 2010. During the familiarisation with the original data it became evident that there was a time cap in the data from 31 August 2008 to 1 August 2009. The missing articles would have been available. However, the data consisted already from hundreds of articles and therefore it was considered to be wide enough for the purposes of a bachelor thesis.

According to Ghauri & Grønhaug (2002, 112) there are two reasons why a sample is taken instead of using the whole data: it saves time and money. Adams et al. (2010, 87) continue by stating that size of the sample, whether or not the size is statistically justified and the method used for sampling should be carefully considered. Tuomi &Sarajärvi (2006, 89) go further by explaining that saturation is one of the methods used in solving the sufficiency of data. Saturation stands for a situation in which the data starts repeating itself and the data does not produce any new information in relation to the research questions.

Since the data consisted of a vast amount of articles, a sample was taken from the original data. The sample consists of 249 news items collected from 28 national sources including newspapers, radio and TV. The sources included Helsingin Sanomat, Uutispäivä Demari, Turun Sanomat, Maaseudun Tulevaisuus, Kauppalehti, Suomen Tietotoimisto, Kainuun Sanomat, Karjalainen, Keskisuomalainen, Etelä-Saimaa radio and TV, Aamulehti, Åbo Underrättelser, Suomenmaa, Savon-Sanomat, Keskipohjanmaa, Hämeen Sanomat, Pohjolan Sanomat, Ilkka, Kaleva, Kansan Uutiset, Pohjalainen, Lapin Kansa, Satakunnan kansa, Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, Ilta-Sanomat Huvudstadsbladet and Kymen Sanomat. A sample this size is large enough to form a comprehensive basis for answering the research questions of this thesis since it is unlike that the data will produce more relevant information to the research questions at hand.

6.2.2 Reading and classification of the news items

The first stage of the research process was reading through the news items. This stage was followed by the classification of the items into a Excel spread sheet. The classification was conducted in the original language of the items, Finnish or Swedish. The spread sheet contained the columns presented in the following table 1.

Column	Content
Number of the item	a progressive number starting from 1
Publication date	Date/month/year
Media where an item was published	Name of the news paper/radio-/TV program
Headline of the item	Full headline of the item
Name of the writer, also a title or a position in some cases	Name of the writer. Position and title indicated when the writer is part of an interest group or works at the Ministry of Education and Culture
Article type	An article, editorial, column or opinion
Overall tone	Critical, neutral or positive
Main ideas	Synapsis of the most relevant ideas
Core messages from the communication plan	All core messages referred to in the item by number and name.
Quotations	All quotations from the interest groups and the Ministry. Exhibits activity.
Reference to the reform	Repetitive themes or context
Other remarks	Repetitive expressions
Interesting terms	Terms used in the items that indicate attitude towards the reform or its executor.

Table 1: Columns included in the final spread sheet

The layout of the spread sheet can be seen in the appendices one to three in the end of this thesis report. Each news item was numbered in order to keep track of how many items there were in total. This method also enabled to compile various tables, charts and spread sheet based on the number of items in each column. For example, the overall tone column had three alternative content choices. Based on the markings in the column, the extend of appearance for each tone could be calculated.

The columns also included basic information such as the publication date, media in which the item was published, headline and writer of the item and the article type. This information helped not only in making summaries but also in avoiding going back to the original newsprint each time. The basic information collected in the spread sheet helped also in making the reference list for the thesis, since all information of quoted items could be easily retrieved from it.

The overall tone column consists of three tones: critical, neutral and positive. Each item was given one option of the three based on the tone analysis made while reading the items. The main ideas column has a brief summary of the main ideas of each item. This also helped in avoiding going back frequently to the original newsprint during the outlining of results and findings.

A separate column for quotations was also added. All the quotations given by all the representatives of the government and Ministry of Education and Culture including the Minister of Education and Science are mentioned in this column. Adding a column for the quotations gives information on how many times the representatives were quoted and how many times they gave statements. This column combined with the writer column indicates also how active the representatives were.

6.2.3 Core messages and themes

Since the one of objectives of this thesis was to find out, whether not the core messages come through in the data, they were given a special consideration during the classification process and a subchapter of their own in this process description. The core messages column consists of all the core messages that are mentioned in an item. The core messages are named in the following table 2 and they are explained in detail earlier in this thesis as part of the communication plan chapter on page 27 and 28.

Core messages	Themes
1. Increase in autonomy	A. Innovation University
2. Main duties: education and research	B. Regional politics and equality
3. Employess	C. Finance
4. Position of students	D. Administrative models
5. Free degree education	E. Openness
6. Economic activities	F. Opposition and interpellation
7. Reacting to the operating environment	G. Art University
8. Capital	H. Legacy of the university institution
9. Student selection	

Table 2. Core messages and themes

In addition to the core messages, the table 2 above also indicates themes that were examined during the classification process. When going through the items some subjects started to repeat themselves in the last three columns of the chart: reference to the reform, other remarks and interesting terms. Reference to the reform and other remarks columns were used to indicate continuously occurring subjects and interesting terms column was used to reveal repeating phrases. The repeating phrases indicate particular attitudes toward a specific subject. The reoccurring subjects proved to be interesting and relevant to the research objectives and therefore they were combined into eight themes which formed another basis for the research. These themes indicated also in the figure 6 below are discussed in the following paragraphs.

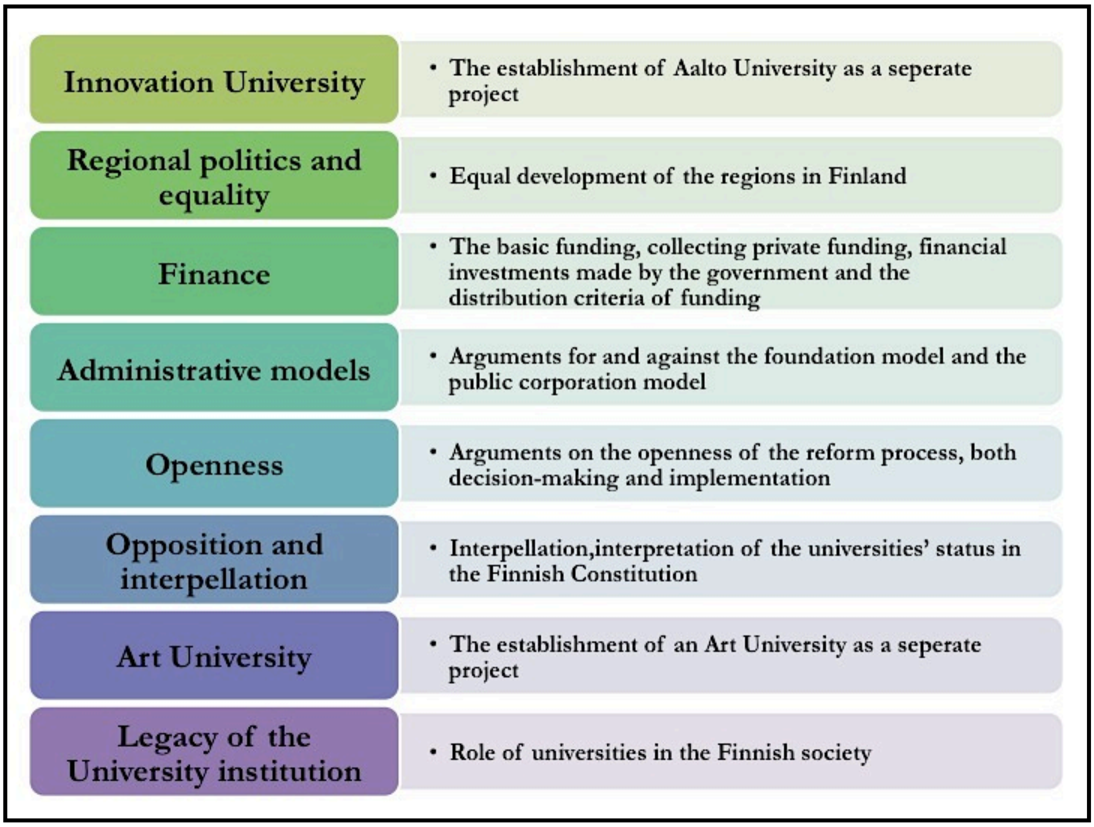

Figure 6. Themes and their contents

Innovation university theme refers to the separate project of establishing Aalto University, in which three universities, the Helsinki School of Economics, Helsinki University of Technology and the University of Art and Design Helsinki were merged. **The regional politics** theme consists of arguments related to the equal development of the regions in Finland. Under the theme of **finance** go arguments about the basic funding of universities, collecting private funding and financial investments made by the government. Also the distribution criteria of the funding, equality in collecting private funding and financing various subjects with private or public funding fall in this category. In the **administrative model** category arguments for and against the both new administrative models, foundation and public corporation are discussed.

Openness of the reform process rose as a frequent theme from the data as well. It was debated at large whether or not the process and all of its decisions were carried out in the open. **Opposition** theme consists of arguments related to an interpellation made about the reform, interpretation of the universities' position and duties in the Constitution of Finland and the language used by the members of the government against criticism about the reform. **Art university** theme rose likewise from the data. It is a separate project which aims at combining several art universities and art institutions under a joint administration in order to strengthen art education, its position and autonomy in the Finnish society. The last theme that rose from the data was **the legacy of the Finnish university institution**. This theme refers to the arguments made about the role of universities in the Finnish society and the possible changes in the Finnish society after the reform.

Both the core messages and the themes were examined with quantitative and qualitative methods. For the content analysis of core messages and themes in the news items both a structural factor analysis and a qualitative analysis were used.

6.2.4 Findings and results

During the composition of the spread sheet it became evident that in order to manage the vast amount of information, the spread sheet had to be divided so that each source had its own sheet. The next step was to find out how many times each core message, tone or theme was repeated. The spread sheets were modified so that each core message had its own number and a column and each theme had its own letter and a column. Also every tone was given its own column. The addition of columns enabled the calculation of the frequency of reference for each core message, theme and tone at the bottom of the columns using the calculation formula function in Excel.

After the completion of the spread sheet, the data was combined into three summary spread sheets: totals for the core messages, themes and overall tone. The totals were compined from the previously made calculations and the three summary sheets were used as a basis for writing out the findings and drawing descriptive figures from the data. To conclude, r.esults and improvement suggestions were drawn from the findings.

7 Findings and general observations

After the classification of the items basic calculations were made from the spread sheet about the distribution of the news items and frequency of appearance of the core messages, themes and overall tones. Based on the calculation summaries an overall picture started to form. The results are discussed in the following subchapters.

7.1 The distribution of news items

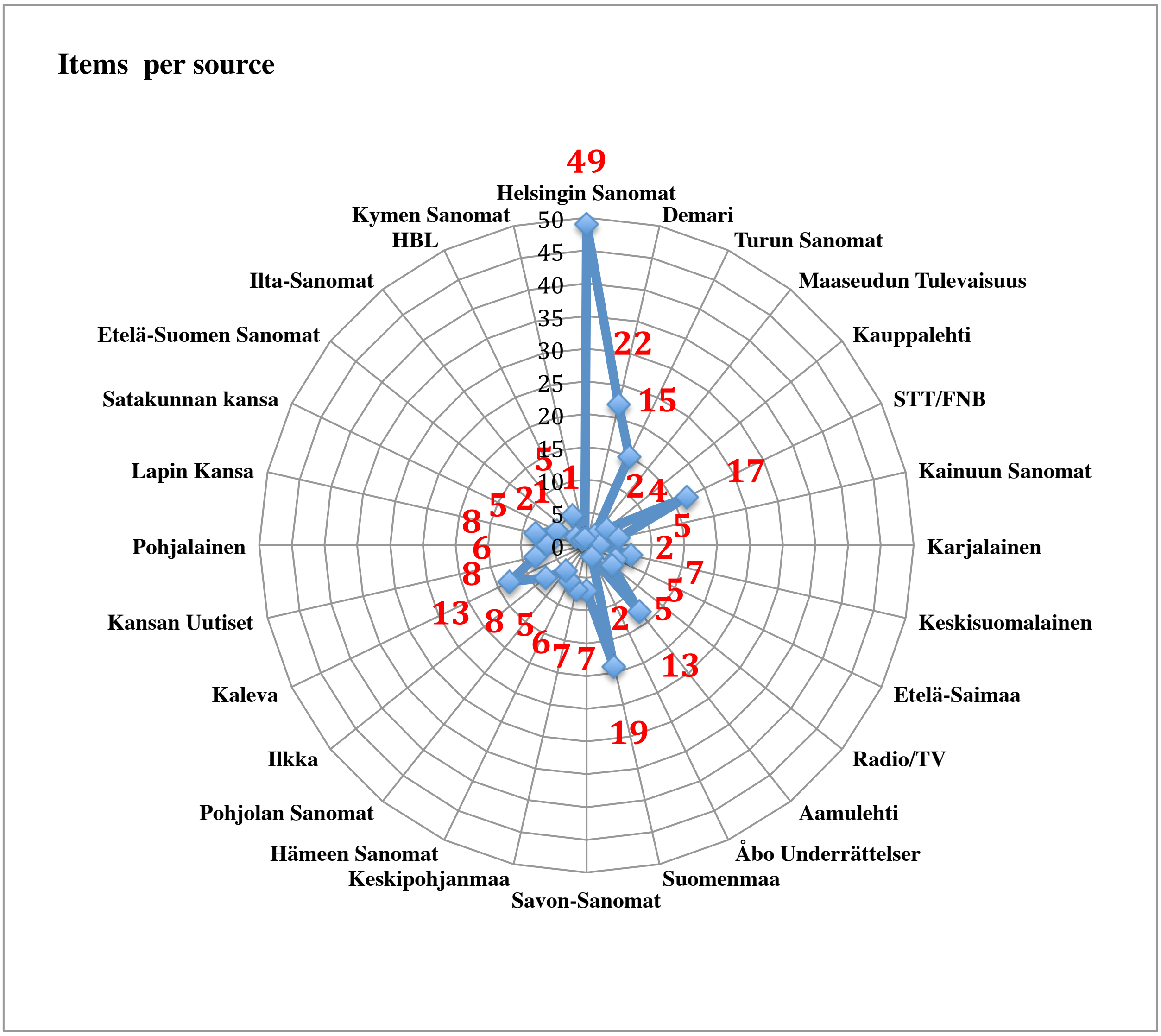

Figure 7. Distribution of news items per source

The figure 7 above reveals how the items were divided between the various sources. The number of news items published by each source varies between 1 and 49. The figure 7 indicates that nearly one fifth of the items are published in Helsingin Sanomat.

Helsingin Sanomat is followed by Uutispäivä Demari with 22 items, Suomenmaa with 19 items, STT also known as Suomen Tietotoimisto with 17 items and Turun Sanomat with 15 items. Both Kaleva and Aamulehti come after with 13 items. In the middle stand Ilkka and Lapin Kansa with 8 items, Keskisuomalainen, Savon-Sanomat and Keskipohjanmaa with 7 items and Pohjalainen with 6 items. They are followed by HSL also known as Huvudstadsbladet, Satakunnan Kansa, Pohjolan Sanomat, Etelä-Saimaa and Kainuun Sanomat with 5 items. Also TV and radio sources published in total 5 items. Etelä-Suomen Sanomat, Åbo Underrättelser, Karjalainen and Maaseudun Tulevaisuus all published 2 items. From the newspaper sources Kymen Sanomat and Ilta-Sanomat printed the least amount of items, both printed one news item.

7.2 Core messages

The following figure 8 indicates the amount of items that contain references to the nine core messages presented in the communication plan. 73 per cent of the items refer to one or more of the core messages. The amount of items that contained no references to the sore messages was 27 per cent.

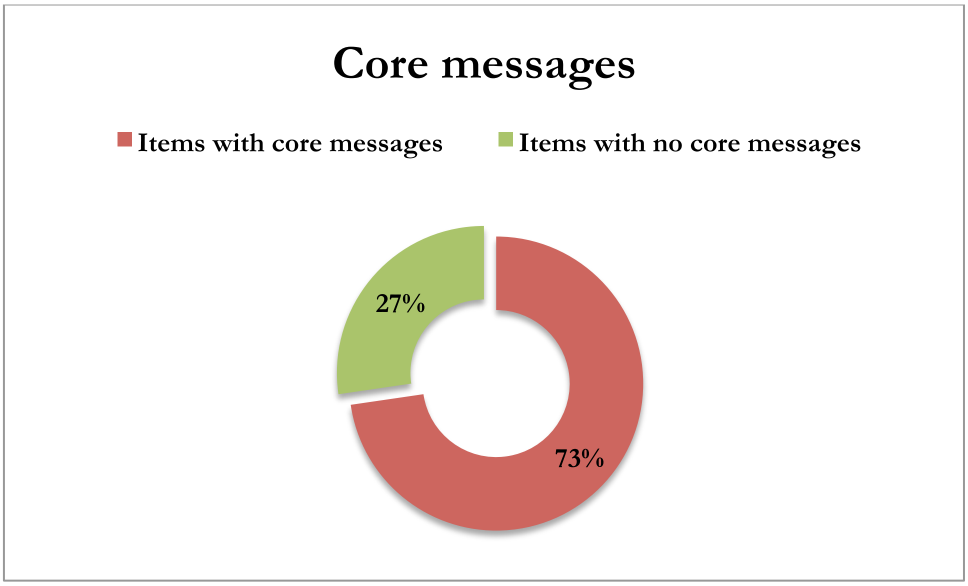

Figure 8. Core messages in the data sample

The figure 9 below indicates the amount of which each core message was referred to. Capital was referred to the most (30.4%). It was followed by increasing of autonomy (21.3%) and economic activities (18.9%). In the middle stand the main duties (11.3%)

and free degree education (6.4%). They were succeeded by employees (5.1%), the position of students (3.7%) and reacting to the operating environment (2.7%). Student selection was not referred to at all.

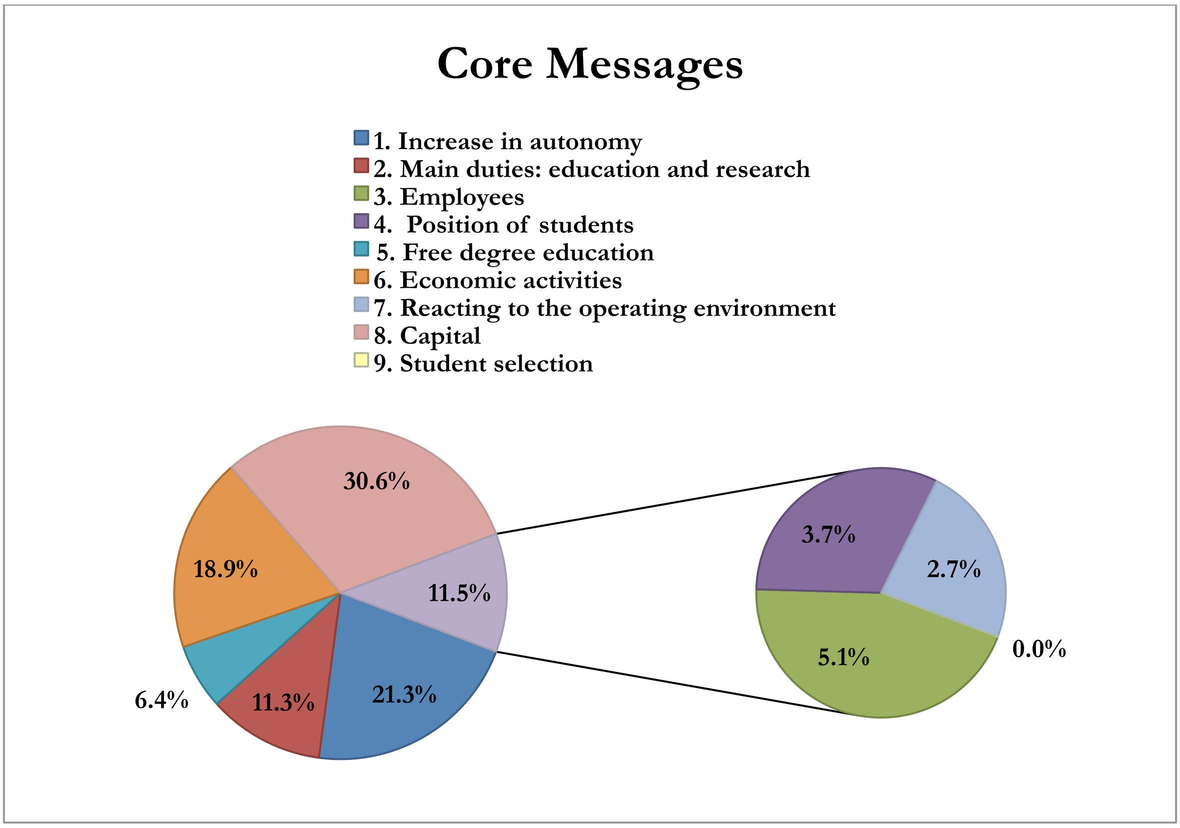

Figure 9. The frequency of appearance per core message (%)

7.3 Themes

The figure 10 below depicts to which extend each theme was discussed. As with the core messages the finance theme was discussed the most (27.3%). It was followed by Innovation University (16.6%) and regional politics and equality (15.6%). In the middle stand administrative models (11.0%), legacy of the university institution (10.5%) and opposition and interpellation (10.1%). Openness (4.9%) and the Art University (4.0%) were the least discussed.

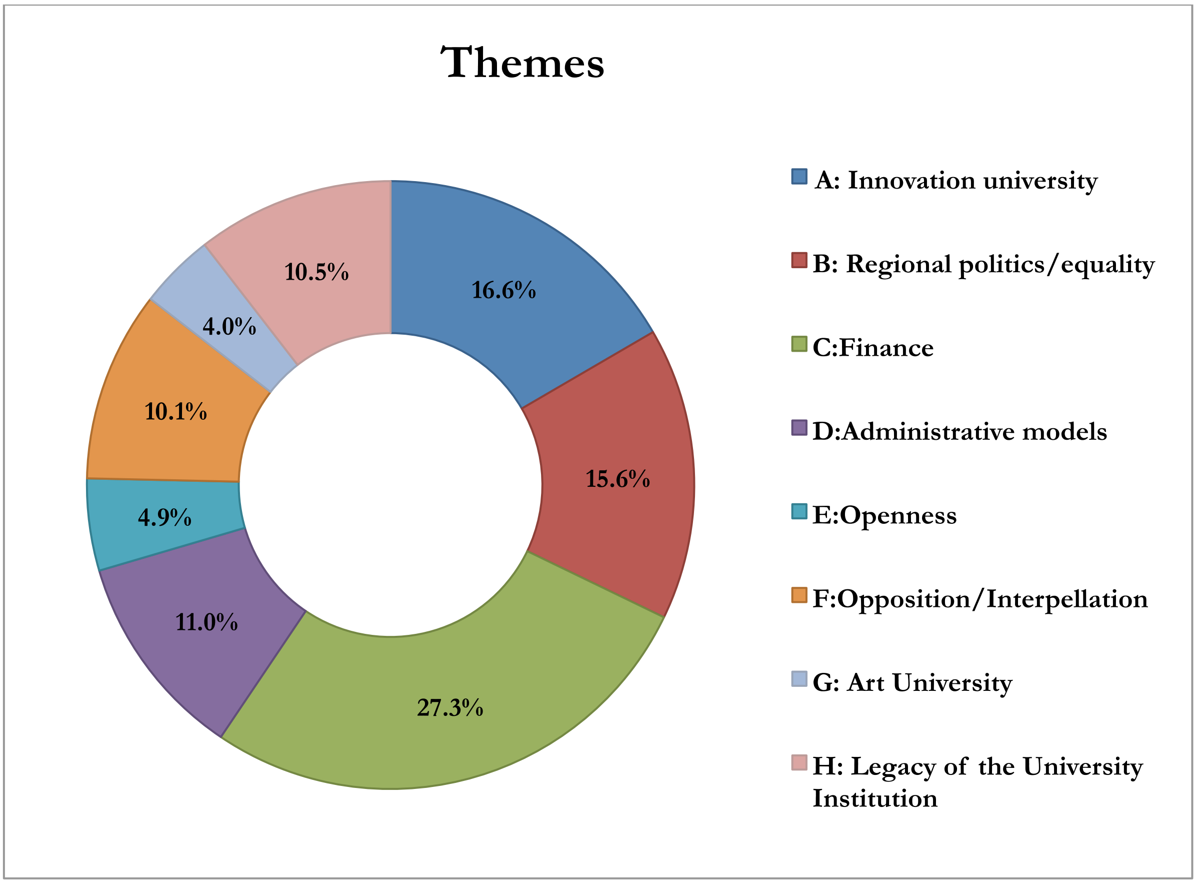

Figure 10. The frequency of appearance per theme (%)

7.4 Overall tone

Each news item was put into a category based on their tone and the frequency of appearance for each tone is indicated in the figure 11 below. The calculation based on the frequency of each tone revealed that most of the items (46%) had a critical tone. Almost the same amount of items (42%) had a neutral tone and only about one in ten items viewed the reform favourably.

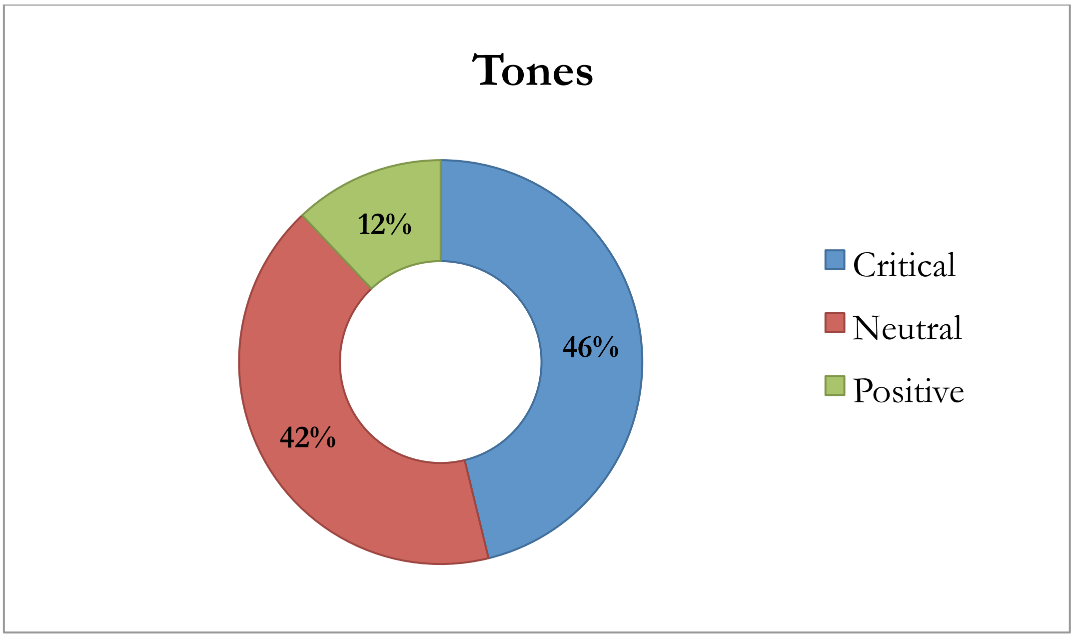

Figure 11. Tones of the news items

8 Analysing the findings

All the core messages except for one, the student selection, are presented in the sample. However, some core messages proved to be more popular than others. The chosen themes were presented well also in the sample. Nevertheless, that was to be expected since the themes were chosen from reoccurring subjects in the news items. In this chapter the results are examined further. However, the analysis part of this thesis will focus on the most popular core messages and themes.

8.1 Core messages

As the figure 9 indicated previously, the most popular core messages proved to be capital, economic activities and the increase in autonomy. Since the first two are so closely related, also the main duties will be analysed in this subchapter.

Capital of the universities **and economic activities** are discussed at length throughout the sample. The figure 12 below indicates that with capital the overall tone is relatively neutral with 56 of the items being categorised as neutral. Nonetheless, almost the same amount, 49 items, is classified as critical. Only 19 items view the core message from a positive perspective. With economic activities the overall tone shares the same pattern with capital. 30 items are classified as neutral and 30 items as critical. Only 12 items viewed the core message favourably. Therefore with both of these core messages the critical tone is emphasised in the end as neutral publicity is easily transformed to critical or negative.

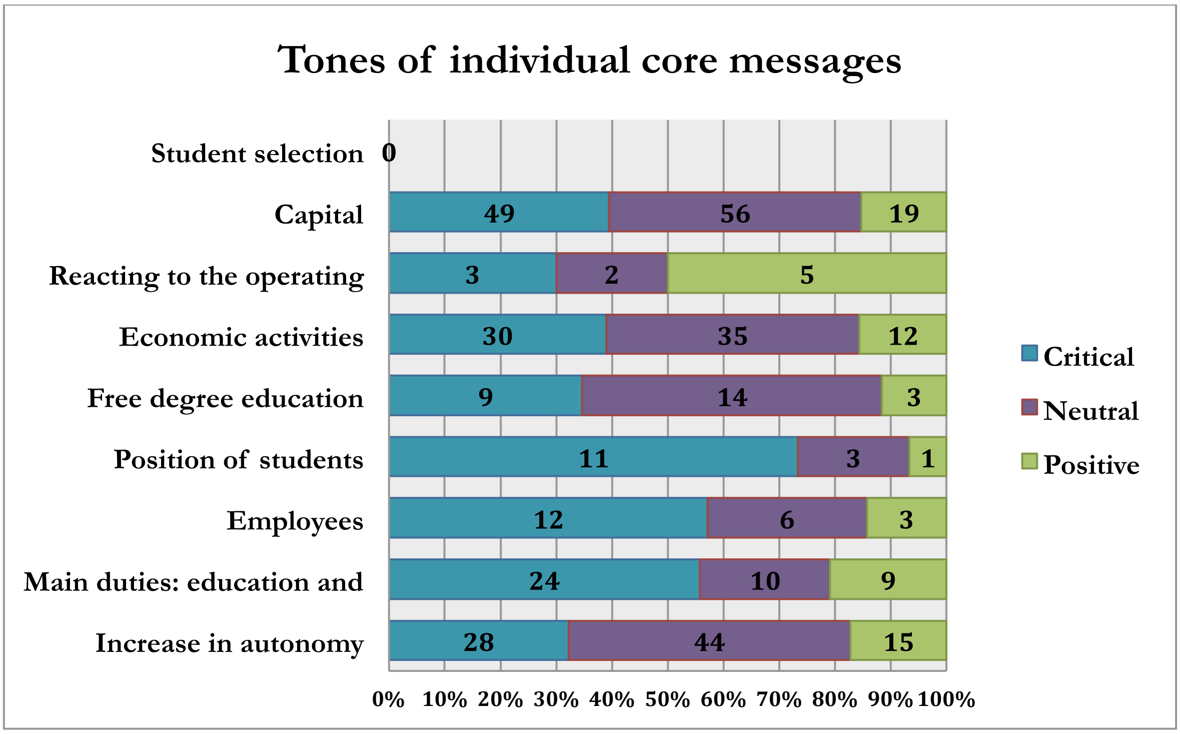

Figure 12. Tone of individual core messages

The most critical view states that the government is withdrawing from the distribution of the basic funding for the universities and forces the universities to compete for funding from the private companies. These notions are portrayed by the following quotations:

> "– – *Vasemmisto-opposition mielestä hallitus on käytännössä yksityistämässä yliopistoja, romuttamassa niiden perusrahoituksen, eriarvoistamassa yliopistot ja muuttamassa ne kerjäläisiksi".* (Helsingin Sanomat 14.3.2008)

> "– – *Yliopistoista uhkaa tulla yrityksiltä rahoitusta kerjääviä instituutioita enemmän kuin sivistystä ja yhteiskunnallista kehitystä edistäviä itsenäisiä tutkimuksen ja ylimmän opetuksen laitoksia, SDP linjasi."* (Uutispäivä Demari 14.3.2008)

The new financial models suggested would accentuate the role private funding, which meant that those universities that would be able to collect money from the private sector would also receive more funding from the state. Even though it was generally agreed that the funding of the universities should be renewed, the data reveals a firm belief that the Finnish universities should only be funded by the state. This attitude is represented by the following statement:

> *"– – Yliopistojen perusrahoitusta tulee uudistaa ensisijaisesti rahoitusta lisäämällä – julkisilla varoilla."* (Kansan Uutiset 24.4.2008)

The argument was continued further by stating that by participating in the funding of the reform the corporate world aims to bind education and research to promote its own goals: the increase of consumption, the creation of new commodities and the augmentation of dividends. This is seen as contradictory to the basic idea of universities as producers of knowledge and forerunners of values. Rivalry and strong management by results would make the operations of universities short-sighted. (Kansan Uutiset 24.4.2008; Huvudstadsbladet 10.4.2008; Suomenmaa 6.5.2008.)

One of the main goals of the reform was to guarantee more financial independence for the universities. The state would guarantee adequate basic funding for the universities and ensure financial solvency for both administrative models. Also the increased independence over decisions about the financials would provide universities better prerequisites for managing their duties. Furthermore, the capitalising of universities strengthens their solvency and grants additional resources for education and research. Still, the additional resources and the changes in administrative models do not guarantee the development of qualitative education and top research. They do, however, provide better opportunities for it than the situation before the reform. Nevertheless, many viewed that with the lack of basic funding and the begging for funding from the private sector the reality was something else entirely than the one the core messages in question and the favorable publicity tried to relate. (Satakunnan Kansa 13.4.2008; Turun Sanomat 6.5.2008)

The **increase in autonomy** is also often discussed. The figure 12 above reveals that a half of the items that discussed the increase in autonomy are neural in their tone. 28 items viewed the subject critically and 15 items considered the subject positively. The discussion is centred on two arguments. Severe capitalisation of the universities increases the latitude of the universities and their development opportunities. At the same time, allowing members of the private companies to be part of the board of directors in the two new administrative models would bring valuable new knowledge to the management of universities, their financials and their operating practises. Furthermore the universities would have to consider their operations on the basis of their future survival and decide whether it is time to try some new methods instead of clinging to the old habits and notions. (Pohjalainen 15.4.2008.)

On the other hand, the incentive money promised by the government to those universities who would be able raise private funding on their own is seen as a threat to the autonomy of universities. The proverb"whose bread you eat, his songs you'll sing" is quoted repeatedly on this issue. The private funding imposes a severe threat on the autonomy of universities because generally it is not trusted that the private companies invest their money without having an agenda of their own. The data revealed a fear that by allowing universities collect private funding, they would no longer be in control of the academic decision-making and private companies would dictate what would be taught and researched at universities. Therefore also the level of sophistication in the Finnish society would decline. (Kansan Uutiset 24.4.2008.)

Another popular core message is **the main duties** of universities: education and research. The figure 12 above indicates that 24 items, more than a half of the items, handled the subject from a critical point of view. 10 items viewed the subject neutrally and only 9 items positively. The discussion itself revolves around the quality of education and research and whether or not the private funding will enhance the quality of the two. The general opinion seems to be that there is not enough basic funding for the development of the education and research. High-class scientific research in Finland is limited by the large amount of students and scarcity of funds. The quality remains average when operations are rewarded based on the amount and speed of finished degrees instead of quality. (Helsingin Sanomat 9.5.2008; Uutispäivä Demari 20.5.2008; Kalevala 11.5.2008.)

Increasing the basic funding in order to raise the quality of education and research is vital. The extension of the income basis supports the quality of education and ensures adequate resources for conducting top research. However, the private funding is not seen as an answer, since the involvement of private companies would decrease the quality. Private investors are driven by different motives than the academic world and therefore the private companies would only interfere by imposing their demands on the education and research subjects. The humanities and social sciences would suffer from lack of funding, since they cannot attract the same amount of private funding as the technical subjects for instance. (Turun Sanomat 1.4.2008; Aamulehti 4.5.2008) These concerns are depicted by the following quotation:

> *" – – Laajasti käytettynä yksityinen raha yksipuolistaisi yliopistoja ja asettaisi tieteenalat keskenään eriarvoiseen asemaan. Lääketieteeseen, tekniikkaan ja talouteen riittäisi rahoittajia, mutta kiven alla ovat yritykset, jotka antaisivat roponsa kansatieteen, suomen kielen tai filosofian ikuisten arvoitusten ratkomiseen."* (Turun Sanomat 16.3.2008)

8.2 Themes

The figure 10 revealed that the most common themes in the data are finance, the Innovation University and regional politics. Since finance is discussed at length already in the previous subchapter, finance will be only briefly covered in this subchapter and the focus of this subchapter is also directed at the openness of the reform process and the opposition.

The following figure 13 reveals that almost a half of references to the **finance** theme were critical. 64 items viewed the finance theme impartially and only 20 items discussed the theme from a positive perspective.

As indicated by the figure 13 below, 45 items cover **the Innovation University** from a critical point of view and merely 15 items deal with the subject positively. 35 items viewed the subject neutrally. The idea of establishing one top university among the rest causes a lot of alarm. With considerable amount of additional funding the new Innovation University would receive an advantage that the regional universities would not have. The establishment of one top university would undermine the attractiveness of the others and they would have less competent students and staff. Also the temporary name, the Innovation University, receives a lot of sceptic criticism: what is actually meant by the term innovation and why are innovations significant for the future of Finland? The interest groups and the public often fail to receive an answer to these questions and therefore the whole concept stays distant to them.

Dr. Curtis Carlson, the president and CEO of SRI international, which specialises in innovations in various fields, emphasises the importance of innovations and states that the timing for the establishment of an innovation university is perfect. There are not many universities that specialise in innovation in the world. Therefore this would be a competitive advantage for Finland but it requires the full support from everyone. (Aamulehti 5.5.2008.) However, this is clearly not the case with Finland and towards the end of the sample the opposition for the project grows even stronger.

The succeeding figure 13 points out that 44 items discuss **the regional politics** and equality theme critically and only 16 items view the subject positively. 29 items cover the subject from a neutral point of view. Finland has a widespread network of universities which enables citizens to educate themselves also closer to home and just in the southern parts of Finland. The capitalisation, funding of the Innovation University and the accumulation of private funding raise a lot of attention because the sentiment of the public and interest groups seem to be that they would ultimately run down the effective network of regional universities.

The universities are considered to be in an unequal position in regard to the accumulation of the private funding because of their geographical location and the subjects taught in them. The general belief seems to be that the investors do not consider the humanities and social sciences to be valuable and therefore these subjects would be left without funding. As for location, the Innovation University as well as other universities in the Helsinki region have the advantage in accumulation of the private funding because most of the headquarters of big companies are located there as well. (Kansan Uutiset 24.4.2005.)

Some of the public view that the Finnish academic world is stigmatised by jealousy and therefore the fact that one university receives something is automatically away from the others. Professor Palotie (Kalevala 11.5.2008) sets the Finnish academic world against the American one where the achievements of others are celebrated together instead of moping what was lost. The problem with giving all the universities a little but not enough funding is that the universities produce then only mass instead of world-beaters.

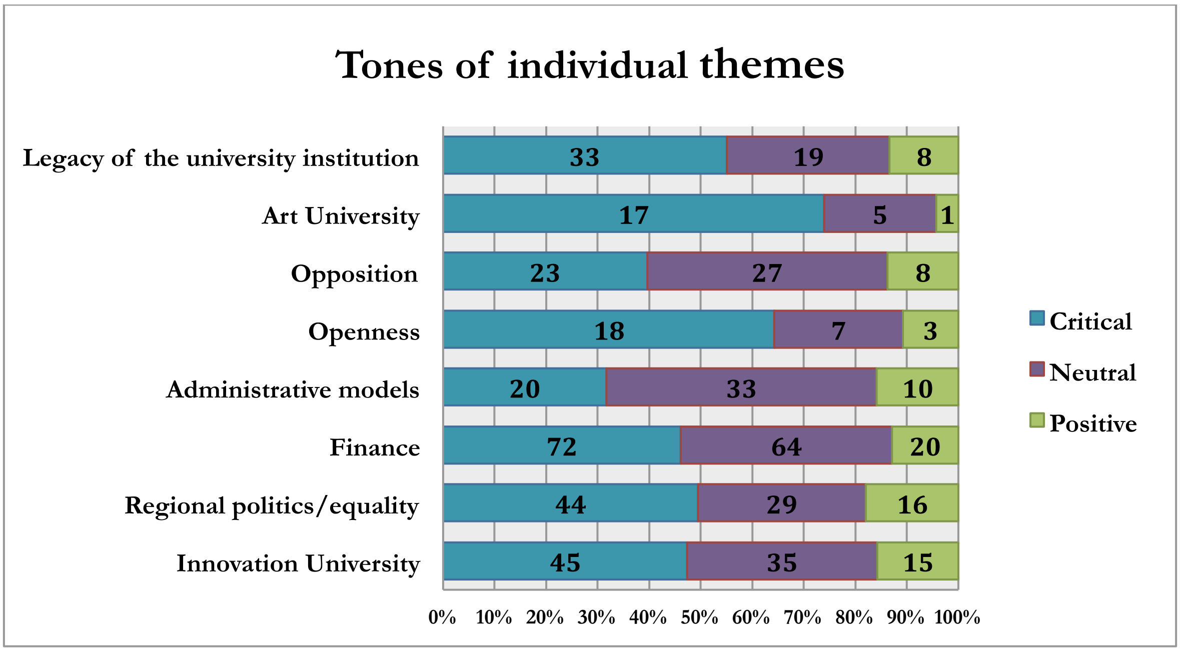

Figure 13. Tones of individual themes

8.3 Opposition and openness of the process

Since the opposition for the reform is strong, the subject deserves also a more in-depth consideration in this thesis. The openness of the process is also a major target for the opposition it will also be analysed in this subchapter. These two will indicate how the interest groups related to the communication process of the reform and whether or not they thought there was an adequate amount of information available to them.

The subsequent figure 14 reveals the tones of the items covering the opposition and openness. 23 items discussed the opposition from a critical point of view and 8 items viewed the opposition from a positive point of view. Surprisingly, 27 items covered the opposing arguments neutrally which indicates that the opposing arguments were not merely angry or bitter in nature. However as stated before, neural publicity turns easily into critical or negative. The openness of the process is viewed mostly from a critical point of view: 18 items discuss the issue from a negative perspective. 7 items cover the subject neutrally and merely 3 items positively. Therefore, it can be deduced that in general the public and interest groups were not satisfied with the information process. Nevertheless, since only 11 percent of the items covered this issue, it might suggest that for the most part the public was satisfied with the openness of the process and the amount of information available.

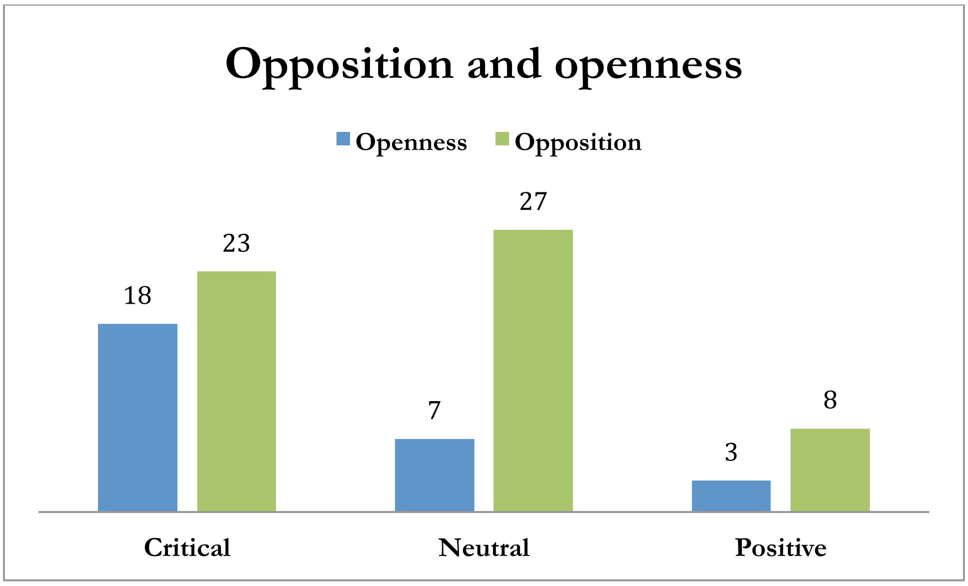

Figure 14. Tones for the themes opposition and openness

The data reveals a strong and consistent **opposition** for the reform. The opposition is mainly driven by the Social Democratic Party of Finland and the interest groups of the Finnish universities. Also the Left-Wing Alliance is a part of the opposition. The voice of the SDP is their newspaper Uutispäivä Demari (known as Demokraatti since 1 March 2012), which published in total 2 neutral items and 20 critical items. The amount of critical items is in itself already an indication of the strong opposition. (The Social Democratic Party of Finland 2012; Demokraatti 2012.)

However, the SDP and interest groups do not oppose the reform itself, merely the way it is conducted. After the government offered the foundation model to all other universities in addition to the Innovation University, the general opinion is that the reform took a turn for the worse and the main duties of universities are under a threat. The SDP prepared an interpellation of the reform and prepared its own model for the reform, which was stated to have been prepared in close collaboration with the universities. (Huvudstadsbladet 10.4.2008; Uutispäivä Demari 25.4.2008.)

The position of the opposition is that it does not accept the discrimination of the regional universities and privatization of the system of higher education. The party considers the including of the private investors in the board of directors as sale of indulgencies. At the same time more money is given to universities that are able to accumulate private funding and those who have not been able to collect additional funding are left with even less. This demonstrates that the incentive money promised by the government is not explicitly understood as an incentive. The opposition also takes a quite personal tone as the various members of the government are accused of hiding information, dishonesty and underestimation of the intelligence of the public. (Savon-Sanomat 10.4.2008; Etelä-Saimaa 6.5.2008.)

The response to the opposition is equally steep. The opposition is blamed for its abusive rhetoric, intimidation with threatening scenarios, privatisation and tuition fees and usage of unfounded arguments. The opposition is also challenged for its static nature: it holds on to the old structures whether or not they still work. (Kaleva 11.5.2008; Turun Sanomat 6.5.2008.)

Also **the openness of the reform process** is questioned. The government is challenged for hiding behind the financial figures to good effect and for the underestimation of the public. The basics of the funding are unclear and there is a demand for them to be clarified for interest groups and the public. The lack of openness promotes also mistrust as the data reveals a general notion that the promises of additional funding are false:

> *"New additional funding will not be granted claims the Minister of Education and Science, Ms. Sarkomaa, what may."* (Lapin Kansa 14.4.2008).

The sample also indicates clearly that the credibility of the government seems to be questionable. The benefits and facts of the reform, which are also reflected by the core messages, are not believable to the public. The implausibility is also reflected in the following headings of the items:

> *"Ministeri puhuu, aina ei tarvitse uskoa"* (Etelä-Saimaa 6.5.2008).

"Kaikkien hampaissa. Opetusministeri Sarkomaa ajaa korkeakoulutuksen täydellistä uudistamista ja innovaatioyliopistoa. Ja ottaa vastaan iskuja keskeltä ja vasemmalta."
(Helsingin Sanomat 4.5.2008).

The lack of openness is also closely linked to the demand for additional information. When interest groups feel that they do not have enough information to have a clear understanding of what is happening around them, they do not trust the institution behind the change and fell that the change is forced upon them. Therefore they might also feel that they do not have any part in the change let alone influence over it.

9 Results

The objective of this thesis was to examine how the core message of communication plan of the universities were adopted by the media and whether or not the communication plan succeeded in this respect. The second objective was to examine how the University reform was discussed in the media.

This chapter discusses the topic of the whole thesis. The conclusions are divided in the following categories: the interest groups and commitment, the core messages, change resistance and the lack of positive publicity and additional observations.

9.1 The interest groups and commitment

The commitment process of these interest groups, the personnel and students, has stuck in a rut in the early stages of the change commitment process which might explain the critical attitude towards the reform. However, the sample was taken from the early stages of the reform process and this might influence the results. Nevertheless, the results clearly indicate that the commitment process of the interest groups has stayed halfway and it caused difficulties for the communication already in the beginning of the preparation phase. The communication in the early stages of a change is important because it enables the interest groups to commit to the change process.

A recently published report on the effects of the reform demonstrates that the personnel still look askance at the reform. The majority of the personnel (75%) states that they are not satisfied with the personnel policy. Even so, less than 15 percent of the university staff responded to the evaluation inquiry. The chairman of the Finnish Union of University Professors (FUUP), Maarit Valo, states that the low response rate can also reflect dissatisfaction towards the whole reform. The report grants that the legislation should be clarified so that the personnel would have better opportunities for influencing. (Helsingin Sanomat 16.2.2012; Helsingin Sanomat 5.4.2012.) This is problematic because if uncommitted personnel cannot act as administrators of the change. Nonetheless, the question remains the same: who is ultimately responsible for committing the personnel of universities?

The Ministry of Education and Culture created the framework for the reform, the Parliament passed the new Universities act but in the end the universities are responsible for the implementations of the changes. Therefore it can also be argued that the universities are responsible for the commitment process of their own personnel. Since the commitment process was left halfway, it is reasonable to assume that the implementation of the changes has proved to be difficult. Nevertheless, there data revealed a certain uncertainty also among the directors of universities which probably made the commitment process of the personnel and consistent communication difficult. In other words, the whole process would have benefitted from a more elaborate and consistent communication.

9.2 The core messages

The communication plan of the reform follows the underscore and explore strategy of Hayes. The plan focuses on a limited set of core messages that represent the fundamental issues of the reform. Effectiveness of communication in this approach should be high because of the attentive listening for potential misunderstandings and obstacles.

For the most part the core messages presented in the communication plan are presented except for the core message about the student selection. This indicates that the core messages are generally well adopted by the media. In addition, the sample chosen for this thesis covers the early stages of the reform and therefore it might be that the core message about the student selection may appear later on in the media. Regardless, the fact that the majority of the core messages are presented by the media indicates that the chosen strategy was appropriate. Even so, the interest groups evidently are transfixed by the vast amount of figures and information available. Nonetheless, at the same time they express a need for a deeper understanding.

Forsell & Laurila (2007, 59) emphasise that the repetition of core messages will follow them through. However, they also consider the right amount of the core messages to be between 3 and 6. The qualities of a good core message are shortness, intelligibility and distinctiveness. In the case of the University reform, all the core messages can be classified as distinctive since the whole reform process is unique. At the same time, all the core messages are short and concise and the core messages disseminate carefully chosen information about the reform. The core messages were mostly directed at the universities and their interest groups because the changes were mostly administrative and financial by nature.

However, some of the content of the core messages was not explicit to the interest groups and the public. Since the university world and its conventions are strange to some of the general public, it might have helped if some of them would have been more thoroughly discussed in order to promote the experience of participation, since education in Finland is a source of national pride. Therefore it is also the changes in the education system are subject to a national debate and heated argumentation. For example the notion of increading the autonomy of universities and at the same time giving them a chance to collect private funding could have been more comprehensively discussed. Then perhaps the two ideas might not seemed contradictory to the interest groups.

9.3 Change resistance and the lack of positive publicity

The change resistance of the reform was focused around the following argument: whose bread you eat, his songs you'll sing. The argument reveals that the financial and equality aspects of the reform where questioned. In addition, the openness of the reform process was strongly questioned. Nevertheless, the resistance meant that the reform was a continuous topic in the media and the core messages were visible in the arguments of the both sides.

The strong resistance implies that the commitment process of the reform has been left halfway. The resistance stage occurs in the beginning of the commitment curve defined by Korhonen & Pirnes in chapter 3.4 on page 15 (Arikoski & Sallinen 2008, 70 – 71). The criticism is easily detected but not obliterated by counterclaims. This illustrates that the interest groups were not ready to accept the reform. However, it is important to keep in mind that most of the interest groups were in favour of the reform but did not agree with the manner and modes of its execution.

The government and the ministry of education are blamed for hiding behind the financial figures and for withholding information. Whether or not this is the case, the issue has to be addressed. The problem with societal decision-making is that it is often limited by the obligation to maintain secrecy and therefore the decisions and plans cannot be made public immediately. This can be seen as withholding information and the situation can become heated rapidly. This can be seen for example in the criticism expressed towards the Minister of Education and Science, Sari Sarkomaa, who personally became an example to everything that was considered to be false with the reform. Some of the criticism grew also quite personal which is a bit alarming since the changes in society and its structures are not conducted on a personal level. However, despite the constant efforts by the members of the government and the representatives of the Ministry of Education and Culture to prove the accusations false, these notions lived on throughout the sample. The interest groups did not give up their negative views.

As stated in the results most of the news items viewed the reform critically or neutrally. Merely 12 per cent of them had a positive perspective. This indicates that the communication could have benefitted from more positive and concrete examples. The reform itself represented clearly an inconceivable entity to a lot of members of the interest groups. They were not able to relate to the process, let alone engage in it because were not able to understand its significance to their day-to-day life. Also the process was considered as secretative despite the assurance that information of the process was made available. This is an indicator that the interest groups either found looking for the information on the process difficult or they could not be bothered to find it. The interest groups clearly would have benefitted from a more specific definition of where the information on progress of the reform was availaible. Also as Siukosaari (2008, 98) stated in theoretical part, it is also vital that organisations also communicate in situation where there are no new information. By adopting this notion to the communication practices of the reform, some of the uncertainty and negativity might have been avoided.

The opposition conveyed also a lot of criticism about the reform. In the previous Parliamentary election the SDP gained a place in the opposition. This and the fact that the

SDP held an election for the Chairperson of the party in June of 2008 might account some of the ferocious arguments in their mouthpiece Uutispäivä Demari.

9.4 Additional observations

Media monitoring of the University reform and a more in-depth thematic analysis of the news items reveals that the argumentation is relatively heated. The heated argumentation indicates that universities as an institution and the equal right to education are still valued in the Finnish society. In addition, the position and sanctity of the universities are seen as taboos that need to be safeguarded. The communication of the reform relied mostly on the core messages and mere facts. The one-dimensional communication style might not be suitable in cases such as the University reform which is also subject to the emotions of the interest groups and citizens.

However, the expeditious pace of which the reform was conducted naturally has also an effect to the communication plan. In this case, the reform might have benefitted from a more conversational communication approach which would have allowed the members of interest groups and the citizens to voice their concerns aloud and the instigating parties of the change would have been able to answer them.

The overall feeling seems to be that the government imposes the reform to the unwilling universities. However, this is not actually the case. The ministry of education clearly states that the reform has been initiated by the universities themselves. The universities have expressed their willingness for the reform in order to receive more latitude and possibilities for their operations. Previously their operations have been limited by the their status as accounting offices of the state. Therefore there was a demand for the reform but in the end the framework and means of the reform are questioned.

The fact that the universities expressed their aversion of the chosen framework of the model gives a pessimistic view of the state and the ministry of education. The media snapshot formed during this research process conveys a critical image of the State and the Ministry of Education and Culture: they are easily blamed for hiding behind the financial figures and for not granting the universities the reform in such condition that they originally required. It seems to be forgotten that the government and the Ministry of Education and Culture created the preconditions for the reform but they cannot actually be held responsible for the commitment process of the interest groups of the universities.

9.5 Suggestions for development

The reform process would have benefitted from detailed information. The reasons behind a change in the beginning thoroughly should have been explained more carefully and at the same time the fact that the universities themselves were the actual initiators of the change should have been emphasized more. The goals of the reform process remained vague to the interest groups and the public, who instead of participating in what they could not fully understand started to reject the reform and deny its necessity. Also stages of the reform were not defined clearly which in turn made the commitment process difficult. Therefore in future reform the reasons, goals and stages should be more distinctly explained which would at least minimize the amount of speculation among the interest groups and the public.

One of the most alarming concerns throughout the news items was the fact that the reform process was considered secretive. The stamp of secrecy could have been avoided by giving the interest groups and the public information on the still stages of the reform process. In other words, the fact that there are no new developments is also worth communicating. The interest groups and the public could have been informed of the new development or the lack of them also through social media which is the most efficient tool used for following new developments on any current issue.

At the same time the role of interaction was emphasised. Interaction between both the interest groups and the public and the representatives of the government and the Ministry of Education and Culture was quite active on the pages of the national newspapers. It is important to provide the interest groups and the public with channels in which they are able voice their concerns. Moreover, more versatile channels could be used to provide this opportunity. There could be for example a Facebook page for the students and younger members of the public. Twitter could be used to notify of the recent events or postings on the page. In addition, a discussion forum could be created for the interest groups and the public. A Facebook page or a group and discussion forums are fairly easy to manage. At the same time they can be used for detecting alarming information, views or tones and they provide the opportunity to address the possible questions or alarming issues immediately. These could also be linked to a reform's official webpage on the webpages of the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Lastly, a customer oriented approach could have been used in this case. As stated in the theoretical part of this thesis a customer oriented approach is not widely used in the public sector because its close connection to marketing. However, in the case of the University reform this approach might have proved to be useful. In addition to the creation of the nine core messages there could have been, for example, more customized messages targeted at various segments of the interest groups and the public. This would have enabled them to fully understand whether or not the reform had any implications for them. There for it would have also promoted additional understanding and commitment.

As an example, the Finnish University system and free education is considered as part of our rights as citizens of Finland. During the reform process, the public became alarmed that this right was under a threat. However, by creating a message already at the beginning of the reform process that clearly states that this right was not about to change and by repeating it at every stage of the reform, the public might have trusted the process more. Furthermore, it could have been emphasized by the same message that mostly the system stayed the same for the public and the major changes actually involved the interest groups of universities.

10 Evaluation

According to Cohen et al. (2007, 133) validity is an important key to effective research. A research is worthless when a piece of it is invalid. Therefore validity is a requirement for both quantitative and qualitative research. In quantitative research validity could be improved through careful sampling and appropriate treatments of the data. In qualitative research validity could be examined through the honesty, depth, richness and scope of the data achieved.

The meaning of reliability differs in quantitative and qualitative research. Reliability in quantitative research is a synonym for dependability, consistency and replicability. The research is considered to be reliable when similar results can be found if another research was conducted with a similar group of respondents in a similar context. In qualitative research reliability can be seen as a fit between what researcher's record as data and what actually happens in a natural setting that is being research. (Cohen et al. 2007, 145 – 149.) However, Tuomi & Sarajärvi (2006, 131) argue that the validity and reliability of qualitative research is considered to be debatable since they have been traditionally connected to the quantitative research (Tuomi & Sarajärvi 2006, 131).

The validity and reliability of this thesis are discussed in the following first subchapter. In the second subchapter the whole research process is evaluated from the author's point of view.

10.1 Validity and reliability of the thesis

Quantitative and qualitative research methods were chosen for this thesis because both of them suited the purpose of the thesis well. Quantitative research methods were suitable for examining the research questions from a statistical point of view and for collecting a sample from the data. Quantitative research methods were more suitable for studying the content of the news items.

The research questions were formulated carefully so that the objectives of thesis could be reached. The data was collected by the communication department of the Ministry of Education and Culture and the sample used in this thesis was taken through random selection in order to save time. The results and conclusions are discussed and argued with logic from various perspectives. The research process is explained in detail, so that it can be reproduced if necessary.

The reason for choosing particular theories for the theoretical framework and justification for using the chosen research methods and means of conducting the research are explained.

The research process was driven by the desire to seek answers to the research questions and therefore the objectives of this thesis are also achieved. Each subject and chapter was considered to be relevant to the topic and the chapters form an entity that is easy to follow and comprehend.

10.2 Evaluation of the thesis process

The author was interested in the topic of the thesis. However, the topic proved to be challenging from both the theoretical and empirical part. Compiling the theoretical framework was challenging since there seems to be little literature on the topic from a public administration point of view. In addition, change management and change communication seem to relatively new areas of expertise and therefore they remain a little distant.

Originally one of the research questions was supposed deal with the special characteristics of societal communication and its limitations and their effects on change communication in the public administration. As with change management, there was little literature on the subject and ultimately the research question was abandoned because there wasn't enough of a theoretical basis to actually find an answer to the question. The subject is only discussed briefly in the conclusions section of the thesis.

The amount of the data was also problematic. The commucation department of the Ministry of Education and Culture had collected all the necessary data already beforehand and it was given to the author. While going through the original data, the author noticed a time gap in the data. Since the data already consisted of hundreds of news items, it was decided that the missing data would not be needed and a sample would be taken from the original data to form suitable boundaries for a bachelor thesis.

Time management also proved a little challenging throughout the research process. The classification of the data took more time than originally planned and therefore the timetable of the thesis stretched for a few months longer than originally expected. Fortunately, the author had started the research process in good time and had room for expanding the timetable without having to postpone graduation of the author.

In the end, the thesis was completed on the refined schedule. The author learned that in the future it is worth it to allow an adequate amount of time to go through the original data since it can be rather time-consuming. Hopefully the commissioning party is able to use the findings, results and development suggestions of this thesis in their future change processes or derive new research topics from it.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Example 1 of the news items spreadsheet

	Date	Media	Name of the item	Writer	Article type	Critical	Neutral	Positive	Overall tone
1	4.3.2008	Demari	Innovaatioyliopisto närästää akatemiaa	toimittaja Olli Hella	artikkeli	1			kriittinen
2	14.3.2008	Demari	Kerjäämisen koulutusohjelma	päätoimittaja	Kannanotto	1			kriittinen

Appendix 2. Example 2 of the news items spreadsheet

Main Ideas about the reform	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	Core messages from the plan	Quotations
Akateeminen maailma näreissään innovaationyliopiston rahoittamisesta, hanke saa tuplakorotuksen toimintamäärärahoihin. Luvattu 700 milj., jota hallinnoimaan perustetaan säätiö. Helsingin yliopiston kansleri Kari Raivio: mistä ylimääräinen rahoitus tulee? Veronmaksajien rahat tulee parhaiten käytettyä, kunrahoitus perustuu tuotettuun laatuun. Innovaatioyliopiston toimintamäärärahoista pitäisi päästä kilpailemaan jo ennen vuotta 2020. toimintarahoituksen saaminen eri perustein kuin muut hiertää. Elinkeinoelämän erinnomaisesti ajama hanke.										none	kansleri Kari Raivio/HY, rehtori Krista Varantola/TAY, dekaani Jaakko Pehkonen/JY
Porvarihallitus yksityistämässä koko yliopistolaitoksen ohimennen rahoitusratkaisuna. Vanhanen heittänyt hätäpäissään ilmoille ajatuksen kaikkien muidenkin yliopistojen ja korkeakoulujen säätiöimisestä.Yliopistojen onkin syytä äkkiä perustaa erit. kerjäämisen koulutusohjelma, sillä yksityisrahoituksen haaliminen haasteellista, kun elinkeinoelämä sijoittanut 200milj. huippuyliopstoon. Jyrki Katainen elvistellyt yliopistoihin tehtävillä merkittävillä tulevaisuudensatsauksilla: 30 milj, joista 21 menee palkankorotuksiin ja 9milj jaetaan 17 yliopiston kesken.	1									1.autonomian lisääminen	none
Kehysbudjetin uusimpaan versiion sisältyi täyd. Yllätys yo-laitokselle: Yksityisraha/säätiö-											

Appendix 3. Example 3 of the news items spreadsheet

Quotations	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	Reference to the reform	Other remarks	Interesting terms
kansleri Kari Raivio/HY, rehtori Krista Varantola/TAY, dekaani Jaakko Pehkonen/JY	1		1						Innovaatioyliopisto+rahoitus		
none			1	1				1	Yliopistolain perusteet	Katainen elvistellyt	